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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13TH, 2014

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CONCERT AGAINST FRACKING

AN all-day music concert is being planned for Cowbridge as part of a campaign to stop any shale gas extraction or fracking in the Vale

The concert, entitled the 'Vale Not For Shale' is on Saturday, February 22, from 2pm until 11pm in Cowbridge Town Hall.

Four local protest groups are teaming up to put on the event, and it is intended to provide nine hours of performances from local musicians.

The Vale Says No, Llantrithyd Villagers Against Drilling, Frack Free Wales and Friends of the Earth Barry & the Vale, are hosting the event to voice their strong opposition to current

plans for test drilling and, eventually, fracking for shale gas in the Vale.

The concert is being organised by Donal Whelan and is part of the campaign to raise public awareness of issues concerning fracking.

A spokesperson said: "It will also serve to build public support for the Balcombe-like protests that will surely happen when the drilling rigs arrive."

The concert line-up so far includes Cian Ciaran of the Super Furry Animals, electro-pop duo Trwbador and local legend Colum Regan, with more acts to be announced.

Tickets will be £10 on the door. For more information, visit: llantrithyd.com/news/

Llangan pupils get in touch with nature!



ABOVE: Llangan Primary School recently started a Wildlife Club, and its members were delighted to receive their bronze award certificates at a special meeting. (FOR MORE DETAILS, AND ANOTHER PICTURE, TURN TO PAGE 3).

School is happy at Estyn report

COWBRIDGE Comprehensive School is basking in the glow of a "positive" Estyn report.

The Welsh Government's education inspection team visited the school last December, and its conclusions were published last week.

The headteacher, Mrs Debra Thomas, said: "We are pleased that the inspection team recognised the many strengths of the school."

"There was praise, too, for parents for their support and high level of attendance at school events."

(SEE THE FULL STORY ON PAGE 13).

COWBRIDGE GIRL INVITED TO SING IN WASHINGTON DC

A COWBRIDGE girl will jet off to Washington DC next week to sing in the American capital.

Ellen Williams, who is now a post-graduate student at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, was 'talent spotted' by a member of the Washington Welsh Society when she sang in a concert at the Lyric Theatre, Carmarthen, and was asked to sing at their St David's Day celebrations.

Welsh exiles in the USA celebrate

St David's Day on March 1, but Ellen (right) will be singing at an event held a week before.

She has been singing since she was eight, attended Ysgol Bro Morgannwg, and has won prizes at both the National Eisteddfod and the Llangollen International Eisteddfod.

In 2012, when the Vale hosted the national Eisteddfod at Llandow, Ellen won the under-25 Oratorio Solo Competition.



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Schools merger: questions remain

My daughter currently attends Llanilltud Fawr Primary School and my son will be starting nursery next year, and I have huge concerns regarding the amalgamation of Eagleswell and Llanilltud Fawr primary schools.

These concerns have deepened since attending a Vale of Glamorgan consultation drop-in session on February 4. The answers to questions asked were vague – no plans and figures seem to add up.

I am worried that if the Eagleswell site is sold, as some of the funding is going to repair the comprehensive school, will enough be available to complete the new larger school?

Also, I feel very much backed into a corner, as apparently if the amalgamation does not go ahead then Llanilltud Fawr primary school will become smaller, due to some of the buildings being unsafe, and will eventually lead to closure.

I am disgusted and annoyed that this appears to be the only option available and that the schools have been left to get into this state to begin with.

I realise that both schools need to be

repaired and that the comprehensive is important, as it's the children's future school – but it appears that the Vale Council only cares about financial gain.

Apparently, the comprehensive already has funding available to repair it, but the Vale wants to improve it further and make a 3G pitch (indoor sports hall). Is this necessary right now when two schools face closure?

Even though I have nothing against the Welsh medium school, it appears that this, too, has funding already available to extend, which seems very unfair, when this school is a new build and has fewer numbers, and older well-established schools face closure.

There are many other issues that also need to be addressed, as mentioned in previous letters, such as traffic congestion, safe routes to school, lack of playground space and disruption to children while a new school is being built.

The numbers of school admittance could mean fighting for school placements in future.

Are teachers, LSAs and class sizes going to remain the same? All of the above were mentioned to the Vale Council, but no clear answers were given. **Lucy Heffernan, Llantwit Major.**

Asprou customer for 46 years...

YOUR article about A&H Asprou's 50th anniversary was great for a business that has been at the heart of Holton Road, Barry, for all those years, and I thank you for that.

I was with Harry having my hair cut recently and discussed this event and I believe that I have been going to the shop for nearly 46 years and it is always a pleasure to see that the team always look after customers as I have always been treated during all those years.

I sometimes ring Harry and say I will be

there at 7am (coming from Gloucestershire) and try to beat him there, and we always seem to meet at the same time.

On very rare days, Andreas turns up and that makes it an emotional time, as he made me feel welcome there the first time I went to the shop.

I have been more than a customer – a friend of the family – and I wish them all the very best for the future.

I will continue to support them as long as I am able to travel to Barry, my home town where my family still reside.

Fred Connell, Huntley, Gloucestershire.

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We will (in certain circumstances) protect a writer's identity, if requested. Please keep your letters BRIEF and address them to: The Editor, **DON JOHN**, at Glamorgan GEM Ltd, Graig House, 53 Eastgate, Cowbridge CF71 7E OR email gemeditorial@tindlenews.co.uk

'What about alternatives to closing our schools?'

WHY is the Vale Council so hell-bent on closing Eagleswell Primary School and amalgamating it with Llanilltud Fawr?

Ever since the community of Llantwit Major was promised a new comprehensive school, the Vale Council, in all its guises, has put forward possible options to bring this about.

Every plan the council has proposed over the last 10 years has had the closure of Eagleswell Primary School and the sale of its land as the starting point.

Have alternatives been thoroughly investigated by the officers of the council and, if so, why are they not included as possible alternatives in the recently-published consultation document?

The consultation document lists alternatives to the building of this super-size primary school, but states that they would not generate enough funding to cover the cost of the other suggestions and, the sale of land is key for the project to progress.

At the drop-in session last week, questions were asked about what the plan would be if the land sale did not generate the required return. The officers stated that they would look at other ways to raise the required finance, including potentially selling off other council-owned land and loans.

So you have to ask why don't the council sell these assets and take out loans to ensure that the required additional investment in the comprehensive school can go ahead anyway?

Why can't the council take out loans to ensure

that Llanilltud Fawr does not fall down around the pupils – as was implied at the drop-in session at the school?

Another reason stated for the closure of Eagleswell is that it needs significant investment (well over £1m) in order to meet the Welsh Government's 21st century schools standard. The aspiration is to get every school building in Wales to comply with the requirements of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999.

Eagleswell is not alone in needing this level of investment to meet these standards. The vast majority of schools in the Vale (and the rest of Wales) are in the same boat. Is the council planning on shutting other schools in the Vale that need this level of investment?

Over the last few weeks, I have talked and listened to people who are in favour of the proposed amalgamation. It appears that the only reason people are in favour is that it will mean increased investment in the comprehensive or that Llanilltud Fawr will not be allowed to fall down around the pupils.

Llantwit Major should be getting this investment, whether the amalgamation goes ahead or not. I call on our local elected representatives to help the local people who elected them and to challenge the officers of the council to thoroughly investigate the possible alternatives before these schools are closed.

David Thomas, Boverton.

Book festival: suggestions please!

THE third Penarth Book Festival will be taking place in October, and the committee is already busy planning!

We'd love to hear feedback from GEM readers on the 2013 Festival, so that we can make this year's version even bigger and better than the last.

If you attended any of last year's events, please complete a short survey to give us your feedback and your ideas for the 2014 Festival.

You can either complete the online survey via a link on the festival website www.penarthbookfesti-

val.org.uk, or pick up a paper copy from the Windsor Bookshop.

We look forward to reading your suggestions, and to seeing you in October!

Fay Blakeley, Rachel Davies, Mel Griffin and Anne Hallett, (Penarth Book Festival Committee).

'A newspaper for the whole community!'

THANK YOU to The GEM newspaper for your coverage of the SOCS (Save Our Community Schools) group and the community as a whole. You have given residents and parents the chance to air their thoughts and feelings in print, on a subject that is hugely important to us all.

A community newspaper for the benefit of the community – The GEM newspaper – we applaud you!

Abi Rees, Llantwit Major.

What most people find unacceptable

THE Vale MP, **Alun Cairns**, wrote in last week's GEM that inflation-busting rises to council tax are unacceptable.

He should think that another food bank opening in his constituency is unacceptable, that almost 350,000 people in the UK have to use food banks, that children are going to school hun-

gry, that homelessness is increasing.

David Cameron's refusal to rule out tax cuts for the high-earning rich, George Osborne saying more cuts to the welfare budget are needed – these measures will hit the poor and dis-

abled. These are things most people find unacceptable. **G Smith, Llantwit Major.**

'Llantwit deserves better than crumbs off the table'

IAM dismayed and disgusted at the Vale of Glamorgan Council's proposal to close Eagleswell school at Llantwit Major.

This is an asset and a vital part of the community here in Boverton and I don't see why people here should be made to suffer for all the years of neglect by previous administrations of the council.

Much of that was petty personal politics of the worst kind, which is now compounded with this idea. Why is it other areas within the Vale have had desperately-needed new schools or refurbishments without having to lose anything? Why should Llantwit Major be any different? We have desperately needed a new comprehensive school for over 20 years.

I was a governor there for eight years from 1999 – 2006 and we were promised a new school then. There was a legal duty to have all schools fit for purpose by 2010! What happened to that?

I am a town councillor here in Llantwit and know only too well the budget constraints etc, but as a PR exercise it doesn't look good spending vast amounts of money refurbishing the council chamber, and spending £700 per chair, then pleading poverty saying they are unable to pay for a new flat roof on Eagleswell; it doesn't add up.

Considering the population number here in Llantwit compared to Cowbridge, we should have over £60 million

spent on us if you can spend £22 million there!

They didn't lose a school, and yet here we are, almost three times the size, and having to make do with a third rate option – and also LOSE a school!

The traffic problems are a whole other issue, Ham Lane East is a nightmare now at school times, with parking on double yellow lines, driveways blocked – the list is endless – so how is doubling the size of the primary school, as well as the increase of Ysgol Dewi Sant going to help?

We have very occasional traffic warnings now, so even if for the first few weeks they enforced everything, it would soon go back to the same old problems only so much worse.

I feel that the council need to seriously rethink this whole plan which is all about finance and not about education – and come up with a better alternative. Have a good look at how to spend the budget in all areas and not just education; are some things really necessary in hard times?

I'm sure that with some trimming here and there, they could find more to keep the primary schools where they are now and do some refurbishment and then just do a good job on the comprehensive.

This is what Llantwit Major deserves; it's about time we did better than just have crumbs off the table.

Coun Mrs Ann C Knight (past Mayor), Llantwit Major

HIGH TIDE TIMES (UNTIL FEBRUARY 20)

The high tides listed in this week's GEM are those in Porthcawl. It should be remembered that along the coast, high tide times will vary. For instance, in Barry, the high point will be 20 – 25 minutes later.

DATE	Time	Ht	Time	Ht
	AM	M	PM	M
13 Thur	05.35	8.9	17.54	8.9
14 Fri	06.11	9.2	18.31	9.2
15 Sat	06.43	9.4	19.04	9.5
16 Sun	07.17	9.6	19.33	9.6
17 Mon	07.47	9.7	20.05	9.5
18 Tues	08.18	9.6	20.37	9.4
19 Wed	08.51	9.5	21.09	9.4
20 Thur	09.24	9.3	21.44	9.1

While The GEM makes every effort to check the accuracy of tide tables, we recommend that anyone putting out to sea, or walking in an area where they could be cut off, should check with a tide table specific to their location.

Primary schoolchildren's cosy homes for the birds!

PUPILS at Y Bont Faen Primary School, Cowbridge, are busy creating nest sites for birds thanks to a donation of bird boxes from Vale firm, Topstak, to coincide with National Nest Box week, February 14 – 21.

According to the British Trust for Ornithology, the organisers of National Bird Box Week, now is the time to erect bird boxes as our feathered friends are starting to scout around for places to raise their young.

Nest boxes provide homes for dozens of species, from Blue Tits to Barn Owls.

Topstak, who specialise in wood stoves and firewood, have also donated feeders to the school, as a ready source of food is also very important for birds as they prepare for the breeding season.

"The natural nest sites upon which many birds depend are disappearing as gardens and woods are 'tidied' and old woods restored," explains Topstak director, Adam Pedersen. "Since National Nest Box Week was launched in 1997, naturalists across the UK have put up boxes to compensate for this loss, and it is reported that we now have around five million boxes throughout Britain.

"Watching birds raise their young is also a great pleasure, and we hope the pupils of Y Bont Faen school will be able to experience it this spring."

Bird boxes should be placed at least six feet above the ground, with no access for predators such as cats, and should be out of direct sunlight.



PENLLYN & DISTRICT WI GO 'WALKING WITH ELEPHANTS'

PENLLYN and District WI held their post-Christmas festive meal at The Red Fox, Penllyn, on January 21, and enjoyed a pleasant evening.

The monthly members' meeting was on Tuesday, February 4. Members were welcomed to the meeting by the president, Novello Peters, who introduced the speaker, Roy Gee of Dinas Powys.

Roy gave a very interesting talk and slide show entitled 'Walking with Elephants', describing the three-and-a-half months he spent in South Africa working as a volunteer on wildlife reserves.

He gave an informative insight into life in the regions he visited and the work of researchers, and showed some wonderful close-

up photography of elephants and other game.

In some cases he had been perilously close to large and dangerous animals! He divulged many interesting facts about African elephants.

As well as the superb pictures of elephants, his slide show included pictures of warthogs, tree-frogs, leopard, tortoises, giraffes, Cape buffalo, dung beetles, black-maned lions and antelopes.

He shared with us many humorous anecdotes from his trip. Vice-president

Rhiannon Cory thanked Roy for his enjoyable and educational talk.

Following teas/coffees and cakes, the members were informed of various local and federation events. We then began making plans for our 50th anniversary celebrations in November.

The darts team members are practising for the Federation darts competition on February 15, and we all wish them good luck!

On February 19, we will re-commence our craft evenings, and will

be focusing on items for the Glamorgan WI Show, and considering a Rose Bowl competition entry.

On Saturday, March 1, St David's Day, 10am – noon, we will be holding a coffee morning in Penllyn Village Hall, and hope as many people as possible will join us for 'Coffee and Welshcakes' (£2), and have the chance to buy items from our cake stall.

On Saturday, March 15, 10am – 4pm, in the village hall, we are having a patchwork workshop, led by Jill Watkins.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, March 4, at 7.30pm, in the village hall and our speaker will be Richard Marks, talking about 'Farming in Scotland and Argyll Wildlife'.

New members are always warmly welcomed; we meet on the first Tuesday in every month (except August), at 7.30pm in Penllyn Village Hall.

For further information contact Novello 01656 674191 or Marjorie 01656 647115. MN

COMMUNITY NEWS

TREOES, LLANGAN & ST MARY HILL
Your local correspondent is **Nancy Davidge, "Tynewydd", Llangan. (01656) 860303**

Bus speaker

TODAY (February 13) the Young At Heart Club's speaker is from the bus company which is now serving the village communities.

I understand questions will be answered as to how long the service will continue. This meeting will be of interest to the villagers who are so dependent on a village bus service.

The Young At Heart Club meetings are in the Treoes village hall, 1pm to 3.30pm each Thursday.

Farewell!

IT'S time to say goodbye to Vera and Terry Jones, who have been staunch supporters of the Young At Heart Club for many years.

Vera left the bright lights of London in 1957 to begin a new life in Wales, where she was destined to meet Terry, who later became her devoted husband.

They made their home in the Fferm Goch area of Llangan but now, due to Vera's health, they are moving to the Barry area which will be more convenient for buses and shopping, and they will be living in closer proximity to their daughter.

During the time they have lived at Fferm Goch, Vera has been a regular worshipper at St Mary Church and St Canna's Llangan. This was possible through the kindness of church organist Mary Lloyd, who transported her to the services.

Saron service

A SERVICE will be held in Saron Chapel, Treoes on Sunday, February 16 at 3pm, when officiating minister is Rev P Dennier. Everyone is welcome.



ABOVE: Lucy Owen presented the certificates.

Llangan children get in touch with Mother Nature...

PUPILS at Llangan Primary School are enthusiastic about their Wildlife Club, and the following report has been compiled by children who are club members.

During the Autumn term the members, known as 'Clublets', gained their bronze award, which culminated in a show that they performed for the school at the end of term.

Among the guests were BBC Wales presenters, Lucy and Rhodri Owen, together with Tim Wort and Jon Gruffydd from RSPB Cymru.

The show, which the children helped to write, focused on the sad fact that four out of five children between the ages of eight and 12 are no longer connected to nature.

The pupils were eager to dress up as different animals, from mice to tigers, to pass on their message that looking after wildlife and the environment is important, fun and accessible to all!

To gain the RSPB Wildlife Action bronze award, each Clublet had to complete six-nature related activities, including making bird feeders and hunting for mini-beasts, as well as putting on a show.

They each received a

certificate from Lucy Owen, who described the children's enthusiasm as "inspirational", and said she was ready "to take a walk in the park" after watching their performance!

As our hibernating hedgehogs sleep on, Llangan Primary School pupils have been in the limelight again.

Looking for a school to showcase the annual RSPB's 'Big Schools' Birdwatch' (running until February 14). ITV Wales filmed the children looking for robins, starlings and blackbirds in the school grounds.

The headteacher, Mr

Steve Williams, commented: "Once again, I am so proud of the pupils at Llangan.

"They are very committed to ensuring local wildlife is given a welcome home within our school community.

"Wildlife clublets are now working towards their silver award, and I look forward to seeing them achieve this."

By the time the hedgehogs unfurl from a deep slumber, the children will be well on their way to their next award, completing tasks such as birdwatching, writing to their MP, and recycling!

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Cowbridge seniors' AGM

THE next meeting of the Cowbridge Senior Citizens' group is on Thursday, February 20, at 2pm in the Lesser Hall, Cowbridge Town Hall. It will also be the group's annual general meeting, and will be followed by afternoon tea. Members are asked to bring along a plate of food.

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'Come along and learn about CPR and using a defibrillator' Late St Valentine's First Responder event – supported by Welsh Hearts

LOCAL First Responders are holding a special St Valentine's event at St Athan in conjunction with the Welsh Hearts charity.

The evening is open to anyone who wants to learn about how to operate a defibrillator.

Well known First Responder Byron Evans told The GEM it would give people an invaluable insight how to use vital life-saving equipment.

"We're billing the evening on Monday, February 17, a late St Valentine's Day event because the theme is about being kind to people's hearts."

"In conjunction with Welsh Hearts we will be running a course in CPR and how to operate a defibrillator."

"It is being held in the Three Horseshoes public house from 7pm to 9pm. Anyone from the Vale is welcome to attend."

Llantwit Major and St Athan First Responders will take people through the timeline of an emergency – from the moment a call is received, to the moment a First Responder arrives and assesses a patient, and how treatment is administered.

Byron stressed that alongside their emergency

duties local volunteer First Responders wanted to spare some of their time getting their message out to the public.

"We are hoping the meetings might become a monthly event and are looking forward to hosting another one in Llanmaes shortly."

"On this first night, we are hoping to be able to present St Athan with a defibrillator."



LEFT:
Byron Evans has issued an invitation to people in the Vale to attend a special training event in CPR and the use of defibrillators.

COWBRIDGE WOMAN'S FUNDRAISING DRIVE FOR THE PHILIPPINES

GEM readers may recall that in last week's edition we told how the Carney family from Cowbridge had spent New Year's Eve helping the relief effort for a devastated island in the Philippines.

Hilary Carney told how she had brought many arts and crafts from the island of Bantayan, and she was intending to sell them at craft events to raise money for the islanders.

The photo shows Hilary preparing a stall selling handicrafts at the February meeting of Glamorgan's Quilters.

Hilary told The GEM: "Sales and donations generated £170 for Bantayan Island. I am very grateful for their kind and generous support."

"If anybody is interested in supporting this Philippine island, purchasing any handicrafts, or would like information on future fundraising events, they can contact me by email, hilarymcarney@gmail.com."



ABOVE: Hilary Carney at her fundraising stall for the Philippines. (Photograph by Monica Dennis).

Museum seeks a new curator

THE trustees and helpers of Cowbridge and District Museum are sad to report that James Evans, who has been our very helpful curator, has had to relinquish his role due to the need to spend more time studying for some very important exams.

We would like to wish him well in his studies and hope he gets the results he needs.

This means that the museum is now in need of a new curator, and also a new trustee, due to the passing

away of Marylyn Cope, who is also sadly missed. We are deeply indebted to Marylyn for all the help she gave to the museum.

If there are any GEM readers who feel they would like to offer their services as a curator, trustee or helper, we would be very glad to hear from you.

You can visit us at our next opening, in the Town Hall, (council chamber entrance) on Saturday, March 1; or telephone 01446

773248// 07833 431730, for further details.

STEVE HARKETT,
Hon secretary

Council grants will support local events

THE Vale Council has allocated a number of grants to support events in the Llantwit Major and Cowbridge areas over the coming year.

This year's Llantwit Major Summer Carnival, on June 21, is set to receive a £2,000 grant.

The following month, the 'Beyond the Border' storytelling festival in St Donat's will receive £5,500 to help cover costs.

In a report to the Vale Council cabinet, it was revealed that the festival had asked for £11,000, spread over two years. However, the council had decided to offer a grant for one

year, with a decision pending on any future festivals.

The Vale Show, which once again is at Fonnman, gets a grant of £2,500 from the Vale Council. However, the council will be spending an extra £8,000 on hiring space and putting on various activities.

When Bonfire Night comes around, Llantwit Major will receive a £1,000 grant for its fireworks display.

Finally, as Christmas approaches, there are grants for Llantwit Major's Christmas event (£2,000) and for St Athan's Christmas event (also £2,000).

The Reindeer parade at Cowbridge has also been granted £2,000.

Boverton residents meet flood experts... AS TORRENTIAL RAIN CONTINUES TO FALL

LAST week, as rain continued to fall in south Wales and the rest of the UK, Boverton residents had the chance to examine proposals to reduce the risk of flooding in the area.

Mr Colm O'Shea, from the Boverton Flood Group, attended the meeting and, to keep Llantwit members informed, has sent the following report:

At the meeting were representatives from the Vale Council, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Alun Cairns MP, with residents and business owners affected by flooding in recent years.

JBA Consulting, who had been appointed to produce a model defining the logistics of the flooding in the village, were also there.

Miles Punter, the director of visible services at the Vale Council, opened the meeting and stressed that the council was doing its utmost to address the problem in

the village, and had already allocated a sum of £250,000 towards the project.

Speaking on behalf on NRW, Phil Pickersgill stated that Boverton was included in its capital programme and consideration for funding for the project will be looked at once all the options have been discussed.

Mr Punter then introduced George Baker of JBA Consulting who explained the model, showing the current situation and findings.

He briefly outlined various options, looking at calculations for a new culvert from its present size through to differing

increased capacity sizes.

These ranged from 28 per cent bigger, through to 98 per cent, and he explained the benefits accordingly.

He emphasised that the new culvert size would significantly reduce flood risk within the village. He also confirmed that there would be some downstream impacts, but they were described as "manageable".

Residents and business owners were invited to ask questions regarding the scheme.

One business owner requested that consideration be given for an 'Irish Bridge' in the

short term.

A resident suggested that dredging the river upstream, under the present culvert and further downstream would improve the situation. Mr Pickersgill of NRW answered that in his opinion dredging was not the answer.

A further meeting to discuss the options suggested by JBA Consultants will be held by the end of March.

The general feeling of residents and business owners was that at long last the project was moving forward in a very positive manner.

C.O'Shea
(on behalf of the Boverton Flood Group)

Boys pack down for Zumba

TO raise money for their up and coming tour, the Llantwit Major RFC Under-16s rugby team have decided to give Zumba a go!

The Zumba session, run by Linda Norman, will take place this

Saturday, February 15, weather permitting, in the Precinct on the corner of Llantwit Major Sports Shop and Greggs.

The boys will be salsaing and rumbaing from 11am and any donations will be gratefully received. Come

and be entertained or join in the fun.

As this event is outside, we will make a decision on going ahead with this fundraiser based on the weather forecast, after publication of The GEM. AJ

Sensitive Hunter needs a home

The GEM has joined forces with the Dog's Trust, at Court Colman, Bridgend, to find homes for canine guests at the rehoming centre.

HUNTER is a nine-year-old German Shepherd. He is a sensitive chap and can be worried in new situations, but when he knows you, he will be extremely loyal.

He is good with other dogs and he could live with another dog. We are looking for a quiet home for Hunter with owners who have had previous German Shepherd experience.

He will need to be rehomed in an adult only home, and due to his sensitive nature, potential adopters will need to visit Hunter at the centre multiple times to help build a bond with him. In the right home, Hunter will make a rewarding companion.

If you can offer Hunter or any of our wonderful dogs a home, please call 01656 725219, or pop into Dogs Trust Bridgend. We are open 12 noon – 4pm every day except Monday.

LINDA FEAGAN
Supporter relations officer
Dog's Trust Bridgend



NEWS IN BRIEF Theatre date

COWBRIDGE Market Theatre is putting on a special free evening on February 14, with songs, poems, drama and music at 7.30pm.

THE Vale National Trust meets at 7.30pm on Wednesday, February 19, at The Duke of Wellington, when Mrs Pamela Robson will talk about William Lever and Port Sunlight Village. New members are welcome.

Book group

THE inaugural meeting of the Cowbridge Library Book Group will take place on Wednesday February 19, from 7pm – 8pm at the library. For more information, and to book your place contact the library on 01446 773941.

Art society

COWBRIDGE Art Society will meet on Thursday, February 20, when Cardiff artist Tracey Williams will give a demonstration on 'Painting from the Imagination'.

The society meets on Thursday evenings at the Old Hall, Cowbridge (7pm-9pm) and visitors and new members are welcome.

COWBRIDGE library is holding a mega booksale from now until the end of the month. All books 50p each, children's books 10p each.

APPEAL MEANS THE ARK STAYS AFLOAT



Father Edwin
Counsell and members of the Sunday Club.

FOR the last five years, the thriving Sunday Club at Welsh St Donat's Parish Church in the Vale has met in an adjacent portacabin called The Ark.

A renewal of planning permission for the building at the end of last year was rejected by the Vale Council – which would have left the Sunday Club with nowhere to meet, amid fears that this could have had a knock-on effect on congregation numbers.

However, an appeal against the decision has been successfully upheld – delighting parishioners as it safeguards the future of their Sunday Club for another five years.

Father Edwin Counsell said: "We are delighted that we have won our appeal and it was very useful to meet with the planning officers during the appeal process as we can now work with them to find a long term permanent solution."

"We appealed against the decision as we saw it as an unjust decision



Welsh St Donat's parish church.

– our application had been rejected on the grounds that the temporary building was in an inappropriate setting."

The Ark has now been given planning permission to remain for another five years and during that time the church hopes to find a more permanent solution to the accommodation issue.

"The Sunday Club took time to build up and now is an integral part of the worship in St Donat's Church as it is so popular with families – it needs to remain for the church to continue

to flourish and grow and to do that it needs to have a home," said Father Edwin.

"The Sunday Club runs alongside the church service so it brings families together – it is ministry to families not just ministry to children. We have a strong group of Sunday Club families – we regularly get 40 people attending which is great for a small church and can get 60 to 70 people."

"Originally it was envisaged that The Ark would be a temporary solution while it was decided whether there

was a long term demand for children's ministry in the parish. And although the Sunday Club has gone from strength to strength, money which could have been put towards a more permanent solution has been used over the last five years to help maintain and improve our beautiful medieval church."

"It's a Grade II listed building and in order to sustain this building we need to sustain the congregation numbers and that is directly linked to retaining the Sunday Club as the two go hand in hand."

"The many children and families who attend the church have come to love The Ark and meet there enthusiastically during part of the Sunday worship each week. The families come to worship as a whole on a Sunday – with the parents attending church while the children take part in linked and themed activities in the Sunday Club. The loss of the Ark would have had a devastating effect and prompted our decision to appeal against it and we are delighted that our appeal has been upheld."

'Plausible' scam foiled at the last moment

by GEM REPORTER

A St Athan pensioner contacted The GEM to explain how he had avoided falling for a "plausible" scam by the skin of his teeth – and he doesn't want anyone else to fall for it.

The 85-year-old said the people behind the con were persuasive and well prepared.

He explained: "I got a phone call from a company who said I was due a refund because my water drained away into a cesspit, rather than using the drains."

"They said they were dealing with refunds for the water board and I was due £300, but needed to give them my card number."

"I could hear people talking in the background, so it appeared like a proper call centre. It was all very plausible."

The woman later phoned to say the pensioner had not given the full card number and that a digit was missing. Could he find it?

At the time he was unable to locate his card and

told them to phone back later.

He decided to contact Welsh Water to make sure the 'refund call' was genuine. Welsh Water informed him that his bill had been adjusted years earlier to take into account his drainage arrangements.

"When the woman phoned back later to find out the card number, I told her: 'I've contacted Welsh Water and know this isn't above board. I'm going to ring the police.'"

"She plonked down the phone without a thank you or goodbye. She'd told me her name was Sammy Davis. The only Sammy Davis I've heard of is Sammy Davis Jr - the guy who used to sing and dance."

In retrospect, he now believes the call centre sounds were a recording.

He added: "I contacted The GEM, because I wanted people – particularly the elderly – to be warned about this."

Local comprehensive is shortlisted for an Eco-Schools award

STAFF and pupils of Llantwit Major Comprehensive School were recently invited to the Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay to attend the annual Keep Wales Tidy Awards.

The awards were presented by Sian Thomas of S4C and Tom Shanklin, ex-Wales rugby international and ambassador for Keep Wales Tidy.

The school was nominated for the Eco-Schools in the Community Award and shortlisted from a whole array of projects across Wales for the hard work and dedication pupils showed during Community Week in July 2013. During that week, pupils worked on 20 projects, including:

Four days of beach clean-ups at Gileston beach and Boverton beach; coastal path clearances along the Heritage Coast path; Llantwit Major cemetery was cleared and sections of overgrown hedges cleared; fencing and a pathway in Penarth's Alexandra Park was cleared and

Llantwit Major's lawn bowling club's benches and storage buildings repainted.

The project linked strongly with the Eco-School's methodology and contributed greatly to many actions identified in their environmental review and the Eco-School's Action Plan targets for 2013.

It will form important evidence to sustain their third Green Flag in May 2014. In particular, it emphasised global citizenship and strengthened community links by increasing pupils' awareness of their local area and promoting sustainability issues in the wider community. Other key areas such as litter, recycling and improving school grounds were a key focus throughout the project.

As a result of the project, there has been a shift in the culture and behaviour of pupils in their respect for the local community and environment.

Pupils now appreciate the importance of working together to achieve common goals, as well as promoting a shared view of what it means to be a responsible local and global citizen.

Recently, many more pupils have become involved in eco projects across the school and have developed links within the community through the project e.g. work experience opportunities, an inter-cultural club, curriculum links with Atlantic College and transition projects with local primary schools.

The week was such a huge success, it is now going to be an important biannual event in the school calendar.

Despite losing out on the award to a primary school in Caerphilly, the school was highly commended for its efforts, and it was noted the difference that pupils made to their community during the week.

It was a very rewarding experience for everyone involved.

Llantwit Major is a school for the 21st century at the heart of the community and it is projects like this that really highlight the compassion and 'give it a go' attitude of the pupils. Congratulations, everyone!

SL



Supported by The GEM newspaper

Ellie is a young chef of the future

ELLIE JOSE is a talented chef, which was noticed at Llantwit Comprehensive's cooking club where she would trial out the most complex of recipes.

Her abilities are on a par with GCSE and AS level skills already and she is only in year-9!

She appears to have a flair with food, and displays great creativity.

Ellie is good with flavours and food presentation and the school hopes she will enter the Rotary Young Chef competition next year.



Rotary music competition sets a very high standard

THE area 8 final of the Rotary Young Musician Vocalist competition took place in Cowbridge Comprehensive School on the evening of Thursday, February 6.

The event, organised by Llantwit Major Rotary club, highlighted once again the wonderful musical talent of local youth.

Each competitor sang two contrasting songs, accompanied on the piano by Adrian Colborne, the school's head of performing arts.

Izzy Glynn sang 'Path to the Moon' by Eric Thiman and 'I Feel Pretty' from *West Side Story*. Olivia Chester performed Max Raeger's 'Maria Wiegand' and 'My Ship' by Kurt Weill.

Verity-Belle Atkinson followed with 'Widmung' by Schubert and a very expressive rendition of the amusing 'The Girl in 14G' by Janine Tesori.

The winner of the competition, however, was Charlotte Adams who will go forward to the District final in Ebbw Vale on March 8.

She sang Bononcini's 'Per la Gloria d'adorarvi' followed by the popular 'Think of Me' from *Phantom of the Opera*.

Llantwit Major's club president nominee, David Rogers, complimented the competitors for the very high standard of their performances and thanked the judges, Iona Jones and Nic Treharne, for tackling the unenviable task of finding a winner from such a strong field.



TC *Charlotte Adams and David Rogers.*



ABOVE:
The competitors and judges.

Fascinating life of an artist

LLANTWIT MAJOR WI NEWS

DESPITE the very wet and windy conditions, there was a good turn-out for Llantwit Major WI's meeting last week.

During the business meeting, Jean reminded the members of the new 'Sew and Glow' get-together afternoons, which will be held on the third Wednesday of each month, starting on March 19 at her house.

All information on available courses and future events was on the table to be read. The speaker at the meeting was Patricia Mears, a local artist, and it was fascinating to hear about her life and career. As a child, she was always interested in knitting and sewing, and this led her to a career in teaching after completing a City and Guilds course.

She taught textiles at a comprehensive school in the Midlands before her children were born. She later left teaching

and set up her own business, working from home designing and making knitwear and bridal wear.

She moved back to Llantwit Major for health reasons and resumed her craft work, using traditional skills to produce contemporary objects. She also developed an interest in acrylic painting.

Her two sons are both in the army, and so she raises money for Help for Heroes by making and selling cards and notelets of her acrylic paintings of soldiers at war. We were interested to see the display of craftwork and paintings which she had brought to show us.

The competition for a favourite picture was won by Eileen Tomkinson and the bloom of the month by Marion Hughes.

The next meeting will take place on March 6 in the Llantwit Hall. New members and visitors are always made welcome.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Litter pick
ATLANTIC College at St Donats is inviting members of the community to join them in a litter pick on Saturday, February 15.

Cecil the sheep brings Bible home to children

LOCAL children met to have fun while learning more about the Bible on Sunday February 9, when families went to St Illtud's Church for the fourth of a new series called Sunday@4.

The event provides an informal setting for children and adults to come into the church and learn Bible stories through songs, games, crafts and food.

Last week, they heard about Cecil the sheep, who wandered away from his flock, climbed a mountain and got lost.

Fortunately, his farmer came and

Gather at the main gate at 2pm and walk the road towards Llantwit in celebration of our 'Go Green Week'. Bags and gloves supplied.

Thrift shop
THE Thrift Shop, St Athan, will be closed in half term week February 24 to 28 and will reopen at 10am on Monday March 3.

Life Savers
WELSH Hearts are holding free one-off training for two hours on Monday, February 17 at The Three Horseshoes pub, The Square, St Athan, from 7pm-9pm.

Bowls meeting
THE 40th anniversary pre-season meeting for Llantwit Major lady bowlers will be held at the clubhouse on February 28 at 2.30pm. Please try to attend as this will be our 40th anniversary year.

Merger plans: 'Bridgend is more important than Cardiff'

THE proposal by the Williams Commission that the Vale Council should merge with Cardiff City Council is only the latest manifestation of a 'drip-feed' campaign that has been ongoing for several years.

Regular press and other media releases have regularly emphasised the advantages that such a merger would bring to the Vale, but the reason for these proposals runs much deeper than would first appear.

It is not just about the expansion of Cardiff's geographical boundaries, but also inevitable governmental control over virtually the whole of south east Wales that would be vested in Cardiff City Council.

If one looks at the history of the development of the settlement of Cardiff from Roman times, through the medieval period and on to its enormous growth over the 200 years of the Industrial Revolution, it has always been dependent on the agricultural and mineral resources of its neigh-

bours. The sole reason for Cardiff's past importance, either militarily or industrially, has been its strategic location and, principally, its access to the sea.

This is an advantage that no longer prevails, with the result that today the city has become nothing more than a recreational, leisure and residential complex, which successive planning departments have seen fit to endorse with their approval.

This aspect of city life is much loved by a modern generation of youth, and I see no objection to that, but it hardly justifies any claim that its authority should be extended beyond its present boundaries.

Industrially, Bridgend is of far greater importance than Cardiff and has just as easy an access to the vital artery of the M4.

So while Cardiff postures as a vibrant modern city, it could also be seen as a city in danger of serious decline, a situation of which its council is well aware.

It no longer has any 'raison d'être' and that is why it would gladly accept any recommendations like those of the Williams

Commission's.

Thus it will desperately continue to seek to widen its sphere of influence in the south of the Principality. To adapt a Biblical quotation - Cardiff 'toils not but it does a great deal of spinning'.

Cardiff's neighbours would do well to unite in a joint effort to curb the city's ambitions, but the parochial nature of Welsh politics would probably not easily adopt such a coalition.

In the end, it will be the responsibility of each member of the electorate to ensure their chosen candidates in the local and general elections are wholly committed to maintaining the independence of the constituency or borough they represent.

Sadly, the final decision on this issue may finally be taken out of our hands by the Welsh Assembly, which is based in the capital.

Cardiff has everything to gain from a merger with the Vale, while the Vale would lose everything - including its identity.

Jim Morgan,
Llantwit Major

Tide of plastic waste found on Llantwit Major beach

EVERYONE who took part in Transition Llantwit's litter-pick on February 9, was shocked by the scale of the rubbish dumped by recent storms.

Around 40 volunteers turned out in the howling wind, including some very young children, and one intrepid mum who tackled the work with a toddler strapped to her back, plus a large dog in tow.

We spread across the beach in both directions, while many concentrated on the areas around the Surf Life-Saving Club-house, the field behind the cafe, and the banks of the Colhuw.

Plastic bottles, lids, pieces of polystyrene, polyurethane foam, and plastic packaging were the main part of the mess, but we also found many disposable cigarette lighters, shoes, fishing debris, and several tyres.

This rubbish looks terrible, but in the ocean it causes much more harm, because marine animals such as fish, birds, cetaceans and turtles can swallow it or become fatally entangled.

The Marine Conservation Society and Transition Llantwit's message is to reduce the amount of plastic we use and release into the environment. We can all take responsibility for this.

In spite of the sunshine, the relentless wind made it a battle to collect the lightweight plastic items, and we had to leave much more than we were able to collect on the day. We are determined to go back and clear more when the weather abates.

There was a strong interest in running a regular monthly litter-pick at the beach. Not only is it good for our environment, but can be an enjoyable get-together on our beautiful beach. If this appeals to you, contact Transition Llantwit's Facebook page or ring 07804 624795.

Many thanks to the folks who joined in. This event was supported by Jo Stead, Marine Conservation Society's Sea Champion for this part of Wales, who took the photographs.

ANNIE PAINE



The remains of a balloon, which can be fatal if swallowed by a marine animal.



A shoe, now a home to molluscs and barnacles.



Volunteers found several dumped tyres.

As storms and high tides wreak havoc Mystery barrels of concrete are found in Whitmore Bay

RIGHT:
Plaid councillors Ian Johnson, Nic Hodges and Shirley Hodges at Whitmore Bay with the mystery barrels that have appeared on Whitmore Bay.

REPORT by TIM CHAPMAN

IN recent weeks, the Vale's coastline has endured twin perils – storm force winds and unusually high tides – and that combination has led to a cliffside walk on Nell's Point being closed, and the arrival of some mystery barrels at Whitmore Bay.

Last week, the Vale Council announced that the seas and winds battering the coast had forced them to take action.

A spokeswoman explained: "Due to structural damage caused by the recent high tides, Clements Colley Walk on Barry Island has been closed until further notice.

"In the interests of safety, the public should not try to enter the walk.

"It is advisable that members of the public stay clear of coastal areas at high tides in particular while these adverse weather conditions persist."

Barry Island resident and Plaid Cymru councillor, Steffan Wiliam, said he understood why people were keen to witness the spectacular sight of waves crashing on the rocks, but stressed safety must be paramount.

"The sight of the waves breaking on our coast is exciting and worth seeing. However, I would urge people to be cautious and avoid putting themselves in danger on exposed parts of the headland.

"On the other hand, Whitmore Bay is a great place to watch the waves and I would encourage people to



drop by our many cafes on the promenade and enjoy the beautiful and wild weather from there!"

BARRELS

The power of the winds and the tides was demonstrated when mystery barrels full of concrete were washed up as far as the sea wall at Whitmore Bay.

Plaid Cym councillor Nic Hodges said it was a safety issue that the barrels were swiftly and safely removed.

Coun Hodges said: "After being told by local residents about the concrete barrels on the beach, I asked the Vale Council to remove them quickly.

"Although fascinating to see on the Barry Island beach at Whitmore Bay, they are clearly a hazard and need to be removed as soon as possible.

"It is astonishing that the barrels are in such good condition and, as a local historian, their origins are very interesting to me.

"Hopefully, we'll be able to get more information on their original purpose before long."

Merger would save money

IMUST agree with Mr Dennis Harkus and Mr John Turner (GEM letters page), who both hit the nail on the

head as regards any merger of the Cardiff and Vale councils.

It will save money in the long run and should improve our way of life.

I see by some of the comments from the Vale hierarchy that they are worried about their positions on the council and what will happen to them.

That's life: but look on the bright side, you can always sell your fancy chairs on Ebay! Mr B Kirke, Barry.

Art society demo

COWBRIDGE Art Society will meet on Thursday, February 20, when Cardiff artist Tracey Williams will give a demonstration on 'Painting from the Imagination'.

The society meets on Thursday evenings at the Old Hall, Cowbridge (7pm-9pm) and visitors and new members are welcome.

Upper Holton Road is set for renewal

OVER the next three years, £1.5 million of funding from the Welsh Government and Vale of Glamorgan Council will be invested in upper Holton Road.

Upper Holton Road (from the traffic lights by the primary school up to Tadross Hotel) is within the Castleland Renewal Area and has approximately 100 properties, a mixture of residential and commercial.

The first nine houses in upper Holton Road have signed up to the residential face lifting programme, due to be

completed in 2014.

In March 2014, a report recommending how the £1.5 million should be invested will go to cabinet.

The report states that the council listened to feedback from the 2012 consultation, with 98 per cent of respondents wanting financial help to improve their property, 88 per cent wanting a grant and the majority wanting improvements to their properties to include not only the ground floor but also the front elevation.

Coun Bronwen Brooks said: "The report will propose that a number of grants be made available to help convert

the fronts of commercial properties to residential properties, to help owners provide independent access to first and second floors where there is a business on the ground floor, and help to replace shop fronts and improve the front elevation of the property."

Businesses that take part and receive a grant offer will be asked for a small contribution towards improvements, the contribution is 15 per cent of the total cost.

If cabinet approves the proposals, officers will soon begin surveying the street and contacting potential business owners to participate.

College students pay homage to Mandela

FOLLOWING the death of UWC honorary president, Nelson Mandela, students of UWC Atlantic College have been inspired to celebrate his life and ideals.

Three students, Ffion Mitchell, from the UK, Claire Seah, from Singapore, and Maria Munoz from Costa Rica, organised a Nelson Mandela Focus Week this week to educate others, and to celebrate and commemorate Mandela and his life changing achievements.

It began with an exciting kick-start. The ACappella choir of

UWC Atlantic College did a flash mob South African song, interrupting the vice principal in his morning announcement. Catrin Harris and Ffion announced the focus week that would be taking place.

With support from Lucy Male, the art teacher, Maria, Ffion and Claire set up the 'Mandela's life' exhibition and encouraged all UWC Atlantic College students to take a look, as well as write their own inspirational messages to add to the 'Notes of Inspiration' board that will be permanently framed for future college students to reflect upon.

The documentary *Mandela:*

Long Walk to Freedom, was screened in the college's coffee lounge, as was the award-winning film, *Invictus*.

A Holocaust survivor, Eva Clarke, relayed her mother's story of being imprisoned in Auschwitz and the turn-out for the lecture was phenomenal.

At a 'Letter writing to prisoners' activity in the college's library, in collaboration with Amnesty International, students are invited to write their own letters, which will be sent to prisoners all over the world experiencing similar living conditions to that of Mandela during his 27 years in prison on Robben Island.

Despair for young photographer – as equipment is stolen

A YOUNG photographer had valuable equipment stolen while he was out taking pictures on Barry Island last Saturday (February 8).

Berren Rees was on the beach near the headland at Whitmore Bay taking landscape images at 3pm.

He and a friend were composing landscape shots rested a Giotto's tripod next to Whitmore Bay life-guard for a few minutes.

However, when Berren turned to pick up his tripod, it had

gone.

Berren said: "I can't believe that someone could do this in the blink of an eye.

"It will have a huge impact on my business because as a landscape and wedding photographer, the tripod is an essential piece of kit.

"I am just getting my business started I do not have the funds to replace it."

"I am just hoping someone reads this and decides to return it".

Berren searched the area for two hours and looking for anyone that might have picked it

up. He also asked nearby businesses if they had seen anything, but had no luck.

Berren studied at Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg in Barry, and then went onto to study interactive media at Bridgend College.

It was during his studies that he developed a passion for photography and after leaving college, decided to follow his dream and set up Berren Photography.

Berren said: "I specialise in landscape and wedding photography, and recently won my

first commission with Herbert R Thomas Estate Agents for a series of landscape images around the Vale of Glamorgan."

The tripod is a Giotto's 9361B with a Giotto's MH1311-652 ball head. It is worth £200.

If anyone knows anything about the theft, they should contact Barry Police Station.

Alternatively, it can be returned to Berren anonymously, via his website www.berren.co.uk

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St Athan road to be straightened

WORK has started on a road straightening project, costing almost £3 million, to improve access to the St Athan and Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone, paving the way for new multi-million pound investments in the site.

The Welsh Government is funding the improvements to the B4265 between Gileston and Oldmill to improve connectivity within the zone and it hopes that the work will help attract investment.

Works are expected to be completed by the end of 2014.

A Welsh Government spokesperson said: "St Athan and Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone has had several inward investments over the last three years which have the potential to create hundreds of new jobs, that require the straightening of this stretch of road to improve safety and access."

The Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, Edwina Hart said: "This investment demonstrates the Welsh Government's commitment to making a success of the St Athan and Cardiff Enterprise Zone. I

"Improving access to the site will open up more investment opportunities here. The straightening of these bends will also make the road safer for the many drivers who use this road every day."

Coun Lis Burnett, cabinet member for regeneration, innovation, planning and transportation, said: "I am delighted to see work begin on improving this stretch of road."

"This project is vital to the long-term future of the St Athan and Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone and will open many new investment opportunities to help the zone develop and realise its potential."

The Vale Council is carrying out the work on behalf of the Welsh Government.



ABOVE: Constructors have started work on straightening the road near Gileston and St Athan.

Commonwealth flag to fly in Barry

Over to you, Madam Mayor!



ABOVE: The Vice Lord Lieutenant, Sir Brooke Boothby, presents the Commonwealth flag to Coun Margaret Wilkinson.

THE Vale Council will be flying the Commonwealth flag outside the Civic Offices in Barry to mark Commonwealth Day on March 10, and throughout the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow from July 23 - August 3.

The Commonwealth flag was officially presented to the Mayor of

the Vale, Coun Margaret Wilkinson by the Vice Lord Lieutenant, Sir Brooke Boothby at the Mayor's Parlour on February 10, 2014.

Coun Margaret Wilkinson and Sir Brooke Boothby were joined by pupils from St Helen's Junior School, Barry.

(See photograph on page 1).

Buses could run once again to local hospital

BUSES may soon start running again to Llandough Hospital - and senior staff say the reason is that new parking arrangements have been a success.

Two months ago, the hospital's new multi-decked car park opened and private company ParkingEye started managing parking regulations at UHL.

New patient-only parking areas, closer to the hospital building were set up, along with security measures, including patrols, to tackle inconsiderate parking - a long standing problem at the hospital.

Peter Welsh, the hospital's general manager,

said: "So far it appears to be going really well. The roads have been clear, there's been no vehicles blocking key entrances and there have been spaces available for staff and patients."

"There have been mixed comments from patients and staff. However, this was to be expected during the initial period until site users become accustomed to the new arrangements."

"One of the positives is that bus operators are once again prepared to look at servicing the site fully, which they have not been able to do in the past due to vehicles being parked inappropriately."

"If we can bring public transport back on to the site it will be a great benefit for visitors and staff."

AM helps British Heart Foundation's campaign

LAST week, the British Heart Foundation shop on Holton Road, Barry, which is supporting the charity's 'Ramp Up The Red' campaign, had a visit from Vale AM Jane Hutt.

During February, British Heart Foundation (BHF) Cymru is asking people to get involved with Ramp up the Red to

help raise funds that will go directly towards vital research, support and care for those suffering with heart disease.

BHF Cymru shops have recently launched their annual 'Love Notes' campaign, whereby people can buy a heart-shaped note and place a message of their choice to display in the window. All proceeds for this will go towards the Ramp up the Red to

campaign.

When Jane Hutt visited the shop in Holton Road, she commented: "There are over 3,504 adults in my constituency living with heart disease - a devastating disease which can affect anyone, from babies to grandparents."

"I am delighted to help raise awareness locally by supporting the local BHF shop by placing a love note in its window."



LEFT: Area manager, Terry Hughes and the shop's assistant manager, Victoria Froud and volunteers are joined by the AM in Barry.



PENARTH AND DISTRICT RAMBLERS' NEWS

Dodging the showers on a stroll through three parks

AS almost constant rainfall continues deluging paths in water and mud, it was something of a change to join an urban walk led by Sylvia, taking in three delightful parks.

Forging onwards in dry sunny weather across Pont y Werin and pounding pavements to join the Ely Trail, then into Cowbridge Road East, and Penarth and District Ramblers' first stop at Victoria Park, which was opened in June 1897, a small zoo was incorporated in the park.

The most famous resident was Billy the seal, who occupied the lake between 1912 and 1939, and although the lake was filled in during the 1950s, a statue of Billy stands proud beside what is now the children's playground.

After refreshments, Thompson's Park was next on the list, which was initially called Sir David's Field, believed to have derived from Sir Dafydd Matthew,

who in the 15th century was granted land for service to King Edward IV.

Charles Thompson, a member of the wealthy family who owned nearby Penhill, opened the garden to the public in 1891 and some 20 years later offered it to Cardiff City Council, as long as it remained an open space, retained its original name and he was allowed to manage it at his expense.

After 11 years, Thompson stepped down and as a tribute to him, the park bears his name.

Exiting into Pencisely Road, then onto Llandaff Fields, a drier path at Pontcanna Fields led to the Blackweir Bridge, where the Taff was crashing through on its journey to Cardiff Bay and making their way through Bute Park, they encountered the first shower of the day.

Bute Park was created by Andrew Pettigrew between 1873 and 1901 as a private garden for the Bute family of Cardiff Castle,

and was donated to the people of Cardiff in 1947, along with the adjoining Sophia Gardens.

Crossing back to the west side of the Taff and along Fitzhamon Embankment, passing excited rugby fans making their way to the Millennium Stadium for the opening game against Italy in the Six Nations, several more showers accompanied the journey along Taff Mead Embankment, Clarence Road Bridge and Hamadryad Park, but a fairly dry spell encompassed lunch at the Wetlands.

Crossing Cardiff Bay via the barrage, the sun suddenly reappeared and walking into a blustery wind meant outer clothing was almost dry upon the return to Cogan, with enough time to thank the leader and get home for the kick off!

On February 16, meet at 9am at Cogan Leisure Centre for a 10.5-mile mod/hard walk to Cefn Cyff from Llanfrynach; contact Joy on 01446 737131.

JOY STRANGWARD

Trading Standards warning on 'copycat' websites

T R A D I N G STANDARDS are warning Vale residents about copycat government websites after a number of complaints from members of the public.

Unscrupulous companies aim to trick people into paying for applications, up to £1,000 in some cases, which are available free of charge on government websites.

Services such as applications for passports, driving licences, tax rebates, tax returns

and the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) have all been targeted in recent months.

Christina Roberts-Kinsey, principal Trading Standards officer gave this advice: "After searching the web, always take a moment to check that you are in a legitimate website and scroll past the sponsored results at the top. If you are in any doubt at all, access the official government website www.gov.uk and navigate to the service you require through there."

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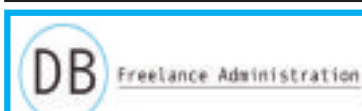
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Tory AM unhappy with Airport's express bus service performance

A REPORT into the Welsh Government-subsidised T9 Airport Express, has raised "serious questions" according to South Wales Central AM, Andrew RT Davies.

The report, undertaken by Professor Stuart Cole and commissioned by the Welsh Government, assesses the effectiveness of the T9 route and makes suggestions for improving the service.

Mr Davies, Leader of the Welsh Conservatives, said that it was concerning that basic steps were not taken by the Welsh Government before its launch, and lamented the higher than expected cost to the taxpayer in its first four months of active service.

The report showed that the T9 Airport Express, run by First Cymru has cost the Welsh Government £242,691 to date (after four months) at a subsidy of £11.33 per passenger.

The report also said no targets for passenger numbers were set prior to its launch, and no market and development strategy was undertaken.

Mr Davies said: "Mr Cole himself admits that this is a high subsidy for a service of its type, but the fact that it has already cost the taxpayer almost a quarter of a million pounds in just four months is worrying."

"I live in the Vale and see the T9 several times a week. The reality is that it frequently runs empty and the fact that it has been called the 'Empty 9' by locals says it all."

"What concerns me most of all is that Mr Cole's report reveals that almost no strategy was put in place to ensure that the route would be a success."

by PHILIP IRWIN

There were no targets set for passenger numbers and, worst of all, there was no market and development strategy, because it was rushed so quickly into service.

"I have every respect for the advice offered by Professor Cole and I sincerely hope that his recommendations improve its viability."

Mr Davies had also suggested that Vale residents should be allowed to get on and off the bus at a few selected stops, and he said he was disappointed that this looked to be unlikely to happen.

He said: "I had hoped that the Welsh Government might look at the viability of including local and express services on this route, particularly in light of the fact that residents of Rhosneigr have lost their own service that covered much of this route."

"Whilst I understand that an express service needs to be quick and reliable, it is disappointing that the Welsh Labour Government now looks unlikely to consider making the T9 available to local commuters – many of whom are seeking to travel all the way in to Cardiff itself."

"Allowing the service to pick up from a limited number of stops on the route on one of the T9's three hourly services would not only have significantly improved links between the Vale and Cardiff, it would potentially have gone some way towards addressing the disappointing take-up in passenger numbers to date."

Heartening news on cancer survival highlights Assembly's care plans

THIS week, I was pleased to launch the 2014 Marie Curie Great Daffodil Appeal in the Senedd.

All over Wales, the Marie Curie daffodils are appearing on lapels, and donations are being made to support the excellent care provided by Marie Curie nurses to terminally ill patients in the Marie Curie hospice and in the community.

On recent visits to the hospice in Penarth, I have witnessed at first hand that care and commitment to patients and their families.

Gareth Williams, Chair of the Wales Advisory Board, welcomed Assembly Members, Marie Curie staff and volunteers, as well as health professionals in primary and secondary care to the Daffodil launch.

I thanked Marie Curie and all those involved in the provision of end of life care, which is a high priority for the Welsh Government, with the support of the Health Minister, Mark Drakeford AM who has said that:

"End of Life Care is care for a person – not a patient, or a service user, but a person in the full and rounded sense. The plan sets out clear ways in which the voice of the individual, supported by those closest to them, is heard and respected at the centre of the service they need."

Last July, the Health Minister confirmed that £6.5m will be allocated to specialist palliative care services across Wales for 2013/14, including £2.4m for hospices.

The close partnership between the NHS in Wales and the hospice movement is long-standing and essential in delivering the right services for people who need the best end of life care.

This focus on Marie Curie follows an important Welsh Government report earlier this month on our Cancer Delivery Plan, which showed that cancer survival rates in Wales are improving faster than anywhere else in the UK.

The report demonstrates real improvements in cancer care in Wales over the past year and as the Health Minister stated: "This is a tribute to all those involved in the planning and delivery of care."

While the report shows areas of progress, it also highlights areas to focus on, such as reversing the decline in the uptake of bowel cancer screening.

The Minister is clear that while our cancer survival rates show improvement, we need to reach the levels achieved in a number of other European

countries and we need to continue to make progress with research, training and new technologies.

The publication of the Welsh Government and MacMillan Cancer Support's 'Cancer Patient Experience Survey 2013' provided the results of a survey which monitors developments in cancer care by measuring progress from a patient's point of view.

The survey reported the views of 7,352 cancer patients and with a 69 per cent response rate, a robust and comprehensive analysis of people's experience of cancer has emerged. This is reflected in the views of cancer patients in Wales who rated their care as either 'excellent' or 'very good'.

The survey showed that 85 per cent of patients felt they were always treated with respect and dignity by staff, 87 per cent had confidence and trust in doctors and nurses caring for them and 94 per cent said they had enough privacy when being treated.

While these findings are encouraging, the survey also shows areas where further improvement is still needed but we have the clear evidence where we should be focusing our efforts.

With £4.6m Welsh Government investment, new cutting-edge radiotherapy equipment is being installed in the Velindre Cancer Centre, which will provide highly specialised and advanced Stereotactic Body Radiotherapy treatment to thousands of cancer patients in Wales every year.

We are investing in the most up-to-date technology available to us in Europe. We are also exceeding our targets for recruitment to clinical trials.

This week, as a result of careful financial management in an ever-tightening public finances climate, I was able to announce a further investment of £50million for the NHS in Wales in my supplementary Budget for this financial year, on top of the additional £150m announced in October.

Health is a priority for this Welsh Government.

ASSEMBLY NOTES



by Jane Hutt AM
(Minister for Finance)

Life-long pals are ready to settle down quietly together!

DOGS Trust Bridgend's resident globe-trotters Poppy and Clyde are a well-travelled pair of pooches, who are looking to pack in their jet-set lifestyle and settle down in a new home in time for Valentine's Day.

The inseparable duo, who previously lived with their owners in Spain and Bulgaria, are now ready for a new adventure – finding their 'furry tail ending' in a loving new home.

The GEM has joined forces with the Dog's Trust to find caring new owners for animals at its Bridgend Rehoming Centre (Telephone 01656 725219).

The adorable pair are devoted to each other and are looking to find a loving home to spend the rest of their lives together.

Poppy and Clyde were brought in to Dogs Trust Bridgend as part of Dogs Trust's canine care card scheme after their owner sadly passed away late last year.

Staff at the centre in Pen-y-Fai are now appealing for a very special owner who can provide a loving retirement home for the lifelong friends.

They both have passports so though they love their home comforts, they would be happy to accompany their new owners on adventures abroad.

Poppy is a 12-year-old Spaniel-cross, who is still young at heart and loves nothing more than stretching her legs on long walks, or having a run around outdoors.

Clyde is a sweet, ten-year-old Podengo, who adores playing with his doggie pals, especially Poppy.

They would suit a quiet home where they can live out their golden years together.

Dogs Trust Bridgend Rehoming Centre Manager Beverley Price says: "It has been such a sad year for the pair, so it would be great to see them embark on one of the most important journeys of all – to the loving home they deserve in time for Valentine's day."

If you are interested in rehoming a rescue dog, please call Dogs Trust Bridgend on 01656 725 219 or visit www.dogstrust.org.uk.



These two devoted pals, Poppy and Clyde, are desperate for a new home after their owner died.

Vale MP hits out at missed ambulance response times

WITH targeted ambulance response times again missed across the Vale in January, local MP Alun Cairns has called on the Welsh Government to resolve this "persistent problem."

He pointed out that Welsh Government statistics reported only 54 per cent of category A calls arrived within the target time across the Vale. This was well below the 65 per cent expectation and below the 57 per cent Welsh average. In England the target response time is 75 per cent," the MP said.

"This problem has been going on for years and enough is enough. Over that time, I have received reports of pensioners who have been left stranded waiting for hours, and in another case, a nervous neighbour simply driving an ill patient to the hospital themselves."

"This is a constituency-wide problem and I con-

tinue to be contacted by constituents from Barry and Llantwit Major to Cowbridge, who feel they are being let down by the service.

"Despite the best efforts of dedicated ambulance staff, the service is not delivering the standard of service that patients expect and deserve. I am concerned that there appears to be little action by the Welsh Government."

"It is also worth considering that if a Community First Responder arrives within the target response time, that is counted as having achieved the target, although the patient could still be waiting for an ambulance for a considerable period longer."

"Hardworking paramedics are being left waiting at A and E departments. They are being held back and not freed up to travel to new patients. Waiting times and A and E are far too long and are impacting ambulance response times."

Cross-party occasion in Vale 'fantastic' says MP



PETERSTON SUPER ELY residents recently joined local MP Alun Cairns

(above) for an event that involved wine tasting, Chinese meal and a talk on a range of anecdotes from Parliament.

Alun Cairns commented: "This was a fantastic community event, which crossed the political boundaries."

"I was delighted to have the presence of well known Plaid and UKIP supporters."

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Soroptimists rally again to Velindre Hospital's Easter Chicks appeal

IN wet and windy weather, president Audrey, of Barry and District Soroptimists, delivered another batch of Easter chicks to bring a cheerful splash of spring colour to the Velindre Appeals office.

The appeals officer at Velindre Hospital, Julie Smith MBE, started the 'Chick Knit' 17 years ago, when her aim was to reach £1million! Having reached her target she is now aiming for her second million, as there is no let-up in the demand for chicks!

Over 13 years ago, club member Maywin Thomas learned of the Easter Chick Appeal and, with her encouragement, members, family and friends have donated more than 12,000 chicks to the appeal.

Volunteers fill the knitted chicks with chocolate eggs and these are sold for £1 each. About 90 per cent of the chicks are sold in schools. The children love them and like to collect them each year.

As well as the chicks, this year the club knitted Father Christmas, snowmen and Christmas pudding decorations from patterns supplied by Velindre Hospital.

These were used to decorate the club's tree at the annual Christmas tree festival in St Augustine's church, Penarth and then sold, with all proceeds going to Velindre.

Money was also again donated to the appeal by club member and Barry florist Hilary West who, together with her staff, Laura, Samantha, Jane and Maxine knit, sew up, supply the chocolate eggs, and sell not only chicks, but also snowmen at Christmas, and Easter bunnies.

The Velindre appeal is always looking for new knitters, and if anyone would like to be involved, please telephone Julie Smith on (029) 2031 6211.

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ABOVE:

The photo shows Julie receiving the chicks from president Audrey.

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Penarth Learning Community remains on track for completion date in October

PENARTH Learning Community is due for completion on October 4 this year and lots of progress has been made in recent months.

Two schools are being constructed – a replacement of the current St Cyres School and the provision of a new special education needs facility replacing Ashgrove School, Ysgol Erw'r Delyn, and Ysgol Maes Dyfan which moves from Barry.

Associate project manager, Ron McClean, told The GEM: "Work to the two schools and the respite building is on track for completion in October of this year, including external areas and car parking."

"On occupation of the new building, the second phase of the project will involve the demolition of the old St Cyres School, Ysgol Erw'r Delyn and Ashgrove, and the creation of the all weather pitch as well as grassed pitches for football and rugby and the creation of multi use games areas."

The project's budget is £48million. The project and cost management has been undertaken by AECOM, the architects are HLM, the structural engineers are ARUP, and the main contractor is Leadbitter.



ABOVE:
The main entrance to Ysgol y Deri.



ABOVE: St Cyres main sports hall.



Looking towards the main entrance of St Cyres.



ABOVE:
The main atrium of St Cyres School.



ABOVE: Associate project manager, Ron McClean of AECOM.

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ESTYN REPORT HIGHLIGHTS 'MANY STRENGTHS' AT COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

A RECENT Estyn inspection has given Cowbridge Comprehensive School a good report – and has identified “many strengths”.

The school was inspected in December last year by Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, in December 2013.

The team of inspectors judged that the school's current perform-

ance, and also prospects for improvement, were both good.

A school spokesperson said: “These judgements were arrived at because ‘standards achieved in all key stages of the school are consistently high in all indicators’, and ‘behaviour and attitudes to learning are consistently good’”.

The spokesperson went on to say that attendance was “above expectations” and commented that “the leadership team has a thorough

by PHILIP IRWIN

understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement”.

It found that pupils enjoyed lessons and had “positive attitudes to learning”. The inspectors went on to say that there were “high levels of pupil involvement in all aspects of school life, especially the fields of performing arts and physical education”.

There was praise also a very positive mention of the work of the Eco-committee and the role that the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme plays in developing young people's life skills. The report also stated: “The school works well with partners to support its pupils and improve standards and wellbeing”.

A key feature, the report said, was that the school “communicates well with parents, who are highly supportive. The number of par-

ents attending school events is high”.

The headteacher, Mrs Debra Thomas, said: “We are pleased that the inspection team recognised the many strengths of the school, particularly the high expectations and standards achieved by our young people.”

“We look forward to achieving greater success and improvement for all members of the school community”.

Scouts and Cubs parade in the Mayor's parlour!



1st Barry Sea Scouts in the Mayor's parlour.



The 2nd and 4th Barry Cubs.

MAYOR of Barry, Coun Claire Curtis, recently welcomed Barry Sea Scouts and Cubs to the Mayor's parlour for a visit.

Last month, the 1st Barry Sea Scouts were invited to tell the Mayor, invited guests and parents all about their recent trip to Saudi Arabia. AM for the Vale, Jane Hutt, along with Chris Elmore the Vale of Glamorgan cabinet member for children's services, also attended the presentation. Coun Curtis explained: “Jane Hutt and I were fortunate to be invited to the headquarters of the 1st Barry Sea Scouts before they embarked on their adventure to Saudi Arabia at the end of 2013.

“I asked the Scouts to come to the Barry Town Council offices and tell us all about their trip on their return”.

Jane Hutt added: “This was a wonderful opportunity for these five Scouts and it gave them the chance to learn about a different culture and to build links between Wales and Saudi Arabia: I was delighted to hear that they are still in contact with their hosts since their return.”

This month, the 2nd and 4th Barry Cubs went along to the Mayor's Parlour as part of their Community Badge project. The Mayor told the cubs about Barry Town Council and her role and then held a question and answer session with the children. Coun Curtis said: “I was delighted to invite the Cubs and their

leaders to the Barry Town Council Offices and enjoyed showing them the various historic photographs and pieces that are held in the Mayor's parlour.

“As well as the Q&A session, we also held a quiz and the children were given the opportunity to draw any of the items on display; the Mace proved to be very popular!”

The Cubs have already visited a PCSO and a fire station and have only to arrange a visit to a church to complete the tasks needed to earn their badge.

Coun Curtis added: “The Cubs were all very well-behaved, and I hope they enjoyed their evening as much as I did”.

RIGHT: Jane Hutt AM with Hair Business stylists including owner, Leighanne Phillips and Leigh Ann Summers, who won an ISA award certificate.



Hair stylists take case for registration to the Senedd...

COWBRIDGE hairdressers, The Hair Business and Fich and Ramous, were at an event in the Senedd recently to highlight the Hairdressing Council's campaign for

mandatory state registration of all hairdressers and barbers.

They included Leigh Ann Summers and Leighanne Phillips, winner of the Women in Business in Wales Award, who has run her successful salon The Hair Business since 1990.

They petitioned Vale AM Jane Hutt, who said: “I am fully in support of State Registration and congratulate the skilled hairdressers and barbers who received certificates and awards at the Senedd.”

Record breaker joins Vale Show

PLANS are well under way for this year's Vale of Glamorgan Show at Fonmon Castle on Wednesday, August 13.

The committee is pleased to welcome world record breaker and giant vegetable grower Phillip Vowels, who will now be joining us as horticultural show manager.

He brings with him years of growing and gardening experience and hopes to introduce some new classes to the show, including giant vegetables.

Phillip looks forward to welcoming new and past exhibitors to the show and would also like to invite schools to be part of this great show by introducing classes where schools can enter, flowers, vegetables and best school's children's garden. He is happy to help schools with seeds and with any advice they might need.

If you would like any further information please feel welcome to

contact the horticultural secretary Gail Wintle on 07976 935 223 or by email gailvegshow@gmail.com NG



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Charity golf match in memory of little Seren

THE Cardiff and Newport SANDS charity will hold its Seren Roberts Memorial Tournament at Cottrell Park Golf Resort, followed by a fundraising dinner on June 20.

The charity support bereaved parents following the loss of a baby through stillbirth, or death shortly after birth.

It is entirely self-funded, run by a group of bereaved parents who devote the time on a purely voluntary basis.

The golf event has become their main fundraising event of the year, enabling it to provide hospitals in the area with memory boxes for bereaved parents, and monthly support meetings.

It has set up bereavement rooms in University Hospital Wales, Cardiff, Royal Gwent in Newport, and the Royal Glamorgan in Llantrisant, includ-

ing providing 'Cold Cots', which allows parents to stay with their babies a little longer should they wish to.

Additionally, they have provided bereavement training to local midwives and part funded a baby remembrance garden in Thornhill Cemetery, Cardiff.

The golf event is organised by bereaved father Gwyn Roberts, who lost his daughter Seren in 2005.

Gwyn said: "When my wife and I lost Seren on November 5, 2005, we were lost. We were distraught. While the level of care we received in the hospital was faultless, we just didn't know what to do.

"Then, just before leaving, one of the midwives happened to scribble down a contact number for the national SANDS charity on the back of an envelope.

"The support we received from

them in those early days was priceless. Looking back now, it seems so lucky it was that particular midwife was there when we were leaving to give us the details.

"Had we not had it, I don't know where we would be, or how we would have gotten through those first traumatic few days and weeks."

The event is not just for golfers. Non golfers are welcome at the evening dinner.

Entries for the event can be made via www.cardiff-sands.co.uk/Golf.htm, and at prices of only £45 per attendee for the whole event, or £25 for the evening only, it also provides fantastic value for money (other payment options, including group bookings are available on the website).

Contact Gwyn by emailing golf@cardiff-sands.co.uk.

Doc's putting on his dancing shoes for breast cancer centre

SUMIT GOYAL, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board's lead clinician for breast services, is taking part in a 'Strictly Top Dancer' event to raise funds for the breast centre at

University Hospital Llandough (UHL).

It sees eight companies competing in the Latin dance competition for the coveted Glitterball at the gala evening, presented by Julien Macdonald OBE, and raising money for the Breast Centre along the way.

Mr Goyal said: "I have endured three months of intensive training from my professional dancer Sam, where we are learning two Latin American dances and will be performing them live on the night.

"I have learnt the cha cha and rumba and if I am lucky enough to get through to the finals, there will be a Bollywood-themed show dance.

"It has been an amazing experience and Sam has been a patient teacher. We had a dress

rehearsal last week and I was amazed at the effort everybody has put into this event, both the dancers and the organisers.

"So for one night only I am hanging up my scalpel and theatre blues to take to the dance floor with Sam, to compete for the Glitterball."

Money for disaster relief



VIC HOPKINS butchers at High Street, Barry, raised £370 from the sale of 5p carrier bags, and this was donated to the Philippines.

"Now, let's see how much we can raise for the flood victims of Somerset," said Mr Anthony Hopkins.

The Ty Hafan lottery draw winners

THE following are winning numbers in the Ty Hafan Crackerjackpot lottery draw number D813:

● **£2,000:** 465169,
● **£10:** 231216,
181369, 409320,
663830, 477996, 930953,
937149, 653432,
647180, 331277, 605249,
312344, 140454, 881559,
534189, 883198, 371331,
578020, 540611, 144602.
● **£5:** 107164, 669812,
174970, 202923, 433176,
338794, 837799, 803686,
396776, 240091, 767373,
143409, 558270, 268482,
132946, 602496, 590558,
246955, 776506, 647725,
565419, 153762, 168084,
710620, 322190, 515682,
432969, 393918, 379178,
816320, 641269, 222154,
246643, 416132, 347159,
357269, 921750, 158233,
286237, 707843, 510353,
766126, 130877, 229730,
217412, 703550, 494699,
574222, 769271,
971444, 562360, 452249,
443230, 438957, 700044,
315304, 232333, 570844,
391174, 458.

The GEM cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions contained in the above.

For lottery information please telephone 029 2053 2300.

Safety call at Barry junction

A BARRY councillor has come out in support of residents' calls for safety improvements at the junction of Gladstone Road and Everard Street.

Independent councillor Richard Bertin, who represents the Court ward, is asking Vale Council to put double yellow lines on the corner of this junction to

prevent further accidents at this site.

Coun Bertin said: "There have been many accidents at this junction lately - and near misses - as drivers are obscured by blind parking on the corners, making the junction a serious hazard."

He now plans to visit residents in Everard Street with a petition calling for action.

Beekeepers are hoping for the arrival of spring

LATEST NEWS FROM THE FONMON APIARY

NOT a lot is happening at present, as the unsettled weather is giving the bees and us beekeepers a hard time.

When dry spells occur, the bees are out flying around the apiary but no further. These exits from the hive are cleansing flights.

So, what is a cleansing flight? Well the bees are consuming food from the stores in the hive and, of course, bodily wastes build up. When conditions allow, the bees will pop out to relieve themselves.

Spring is trying to put in an appearance. I can see some daisies in the orchard and even some snowdrops in other places. Pussy willow is out and there are daffodils out in my own garden, but unless the weather improves, and more blooms appear, the bees will not be able to avail themselves of pollen or nectar.

With the days lengthening, the queens will be laying. I can see evidence of this when checking the mite drop trays that I have in various colonies. Dead mites are visible and when I examine the tray debris more closely under the large magnifier there are very

pale mites observed.

These are mites that did not reach maturity when a new bee was ready to emerge from its sealed cell. Mature mites are dark brown in colour.

How do I know these pale mites are immature? The answer is provided by the life cycle of the Varroa mite. Let us follow this from its initiation.

Step 1, the queen bee will lay an egg into a prepared cell and the welfare of this egg is taken care of by bees within the hive (adult winter bees). In three days, the egg will hatch out into a very tiny grub and these same bees will feed and cosset this grub for a period of five days or so. This passage of time, plus the feeding, will see the grub much enlarged and starting to fill the whole of the cell. At this juncture feeding will cease.

Step 2 will be the sealing of the cell with a wax capping. The enclosed grub will go through a period of metamorphosis, eventually emerging as a new bee ready to take its place within the colony.

However, the Varroa mite senses that the developed grub is about to be sealed in its cell so in it goes to be sealed in as well.

The mite carries out its own breeding cycle while it is enclosed with the developing grub. It draws sustenance from the body fluids of its host (the grub) and while doing so it passes on viruses that lead to sick and unhealthy bees emerging.

Often, the developed bee chews through the wax capping and emerges into the hive, but a number of the mites are always under-developed at this time, hence the pale (not brown) bodies I observe in the tray debris.

When and if spring does arrive, the queen bee will step up the egg laying process. This provides the mites with the opportunity to expand their numbers and I will find more immature dead mites along with mature ones.

There is more to the story of the close relationship between mite and bee, but I hope you get a rough idea of how things go.

As with last year, many colonies have come through winter but without a decent spell of spring weather, we may well have a repeat of last year's losses.

Fingers and legs are crossed.

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ABOVE:
Sumit Goyal and
dance partner Sam.

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Currently, we have an abundance of cats who are desperately in need of a new family, or people to care for them.

For an appointment or further information, please telephone Maesteg Animal Welfare Society on 01656 721496 or 01656 769855. Please leave a message on our answerphone if we are unavailable.

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bodies. Smokers regularly blame a part of them which sabotages their efforts to quit.

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Welcome to Newbold Solicitors

OUR legal surgery (held at our Barry office) has been a great success with many landlords finding themselves surprised at how little they actually know about housing law.

Many have left the surgery with the knowledge of how to manage their properties correctly. However, one theme runs through the legal surgery: "I have never heard of Newbold Solicitors; I did not know you were here".

So we would like to take the opportunity of introducing our firm to you. Newbold Solicitors firm was begun in 1999 by Glynis Newbold. The firm was based in Cwmbran and is very well respected in the Cwmbran/Newport area.

In 2012, Newbold Solicitors was purchased by Brendons Solicitors, merging the firms but keeping the Newbold name.

We have four offices covering the south Wales area. We are one of the busiest law firms in Wales for conveyancing and are often ranked in the top 10 spot.

We are a firm that covers most areas of law, with a number of very experienced solicitors.



A partner and housing

department supervisor, Catherine Hartland, was runner-up for the award of 'Best Woman in Law 2013' and was a finalist in 'Best Business Woman 2012'. Catherine has been invited to work with the University of Wales, and many local estate agents, landlords and housing providers.

Catherine says: "The reason Newbolds has been a success is down to having the right team. At Newbolds, we strive to be the best at what we do, we provide a unique service and aim to provide excellent client care."

"At Newbolds, we believe that regardless of the problems you are facing, we can provide practical, straightforward advice tailored to the needs of our clients."

Our Neath office recently hosted an evening event for local estate agents in the new Paprika Indian restaurant, to celebrate the recent opening of our new office. We are pleased to say the evening was a great success and were even joined by Osprey and Wales rugby stars Richard Hibbard and Dan Biggar (see pictures above), who are friends of Tony Lewis of our Neath office.

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Have you made your will yet?

EVERY adult in the UK should consider making a Will, and here are some of the reasons why:

● Without a Will, the state directs who inherits your estate, so the people you wish to benefit may get nothing.

● Without a Will, if you are married, you may think that your estate will pass to your spouse in any event, but this is not necessarily the case.

● If you are not married to your partner, the law does not automatically recognise partners as having the same rights as husbands, wives and civil partners, and your partner may get nothing.

● If you have children, there may be uncertainty about who will look after or provide for them, should you die.

● Certain people could make a claim on your estate if you have no Will, because they may depend upon you financially.

● Inheritance tax issues may arise if not addressed in your Will.

Wills should be kept up to date and renewed upon any change of circumstances; for example, marriage, divorce, separation, death of a loved one, or upon having a child.

Excluding certain beneficiaries in your Will may also cause potential difficulties as they may have the right to make a claim against your estate. Special care is needed if you exclude persons who might expect to benefit under your Will.

Ensure that you have a Will in place and that it is up to date to avoid any undesired consequences and complications.

Carli Evans is a solicitor with Messrs

Passmores Solicitors and a member of Solicitors for the Elderly, a specialist panel of solicitors dealing with elderly client matters and the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners.



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HOW 'IT' HELPS COMBAT LONELINESS

THE Older People's Commissioner for Wales' team saw first-hand this week how IT is being used to improve wellbeing and reduce loneliness and isolation among older people.

Sarah Rochira's team visited the Springbank Care Home on College Road in Barry, where volunteers from the Getting on With IT project visit twice a week to help residents to get online.

The project aims to help people who live in care homes and sheltered accommodation stay in touch with family and friends by email and Skype, expand their social network and surf the World Wide Web.

Sarah said: "For many older people, access to ongoing

opportunities to develop and learn new skills is an essential element of maintaining their health, independence and well-being.

"Getting on With IT is a wonderful project run by the Vale Centre for voluntary services, which also helps to reduce loneliness by providing opportunities for older people to socialise.

"It opens up a new world to many older people, who are now able to increase contact with friends and family that they don't get to see very often and use the internet to improve their knowledge of a wide range of subjects."

Volunteers visit Springbank Care Home every Monday

and Wednesday and link a laptop to a widescreen television, demonstrating what can be achieved using the internet.

When the Commissioner's team visited, 10 residents were using the internet to watch videos of Michael Buble and Charlie Chaplin, as well as searching for answers to a quiz they had recently taken part in.

Residents have also used Skype to speak to family and friends around the UK and in Canada.

The visit formed part of the Commissioner's Engagement Roadshow, which met with over 5,400 people at 180 events across Wales in 2013.

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Maendy YFC scoops three trophies in a busy week!

A BUSY week for Maendy Young Farmers Club has rounded off three months of hard work and preparation for the annual Glamorgan Federation of Young Farmers Clubs' stage competition.

A well supported dress rehearsal on February 4 at Barry Memorial Hall kick-started a weekend full of singing, dancing and comic scenes.

Thanks go to Fiona Martin and Glamorgan Hunt for warming up the crowd with a quiz. 'Return to Paradise' follows Grandpa Sid who reminisces about the good old days of the fairground to his grandson Tommy, while they stare through the gates of Paradise Park, an abandoned fairground.

Unknown to them, the fairground is opened at midnight by a troop of freaks.

The next stop was the Grand Pavilion in Porthcawl, which saw the seven YFC clubs in Glamorgan go head-to-head for the opportunity to represent the county at the Wales finals in Llandudno next month.

Neath opened the two-night event followed by performances from Gelligaer, Maendy and Bridgend.

On the second evening, members and supporters returned to the Pavilion for more

entertainment from Llantrisant, Wick and Gower.

Following this, judge Chris Jaeger gave his final adjudication and presentation of awards.

Maendy's efforts were rewarded in the form of three trophies – Emily Farr winning best actress; the award for best director/producer and, most importantly, the winning shield for the best overall performance.

The club extend thanks to all cast members, backstage helpers and parents – it really was a team effort!

However, our journey does not stop here!

On March 15, the cast and entourage will take the show on the road, travelling to Llandudno to challenge our counterparts from across Wales, hoping to do Glamorgan proud – and to add to Maendy's previous successes at this level in the drama competition.

Venue Cymru, Llandudno will host this year's Wales competition on March 15 – 16.

This is a fantastic opportunity for team building, raising the profile of Glamorgan Young Farmers and showcasing the talents that young people and the YFC organisation has to offer. For more information about Maendy YFC please visit www.maendy-yfc.com.

Hannah Lewis



The Candyman and dancers.



The Governor, Tom Rees.



Fairground freaks Sophie Thomas, Emma Popham and Louisa Knowles.

Electoral register is being updated

HOUSEHOLDERS in the Vale are currently being visited by house-to-house canvassers, who are updating the electoral register.

Working on behalf of the Vale Council, they are visiting all properties that have not returned an electoral registration form.

• All canvassers will carry an authorisation letter to confirm they are employed by the council, so please ensure you ask to see this.

They will only ask for

the names of people over the age of 16, who are permanently resident at properties who have not returned the registration form.

If residents are 16 or 17 years-of-age, they may be asked for their date of birth.

They will NOT be asked for further personal information.

The canvass will finish on Sunday, February 23. If you have concerns about a canvasser, please call the council's contact centre on 01446 700111.

We're listening – come talk to us



Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board is launching a series of **concerns clinics** for patients or relatives with issues about care to meet us face-to-face; and hopefully work with us to make improvements. Executives and senior clinicians will be there to listen and talk through people's concerns. ABM Community Health Council will also be present to offer independent advice on complaints procedures.

Chief Executive, Paul Roberts, said that even though the vast majority of care in ABMU hospitals is of a high standard, more needed to be done, and listening to patients, their families and carers was crucial. He explained:

"We want to meet patients, relatives and carers who have serious concerns about care and who feel they have not yet had the answers they need. We will listen and learn from them, and we hope some will also agree to work with us to make changes. Patient and family's perspectives will be at the heart of improvements."

The first concerns clinics will be held in the **Princess of Wales Hospital** in Bridgend between **5pm and 7.30pm** on the following dates:

Monday, 24th February 2014, and Thursday, 27th February 2014
Tuesday, 4th March 2014, and Wednesday 5th March 2014

If you would like to attend, please contact us to make an appointment. You can telephone (office hours) 01656 754194. Or, email us on ABM.chiefexec@wales.nhs.uk



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Abertawe Bro Morgannwg
University Health Board

Further clinics at other ABMU hospitals will be announced later.

Rydym yn gwrando – dewch i siarad â ni

Mae Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Abertawe Bro Morgannwg yn lansio cyfres o **glinigau pryderon** er mwyn i gleifion neu berthnasau sydd â phroblemau ynglŷn â gofal gwrdd â ni wyneb yn wyneb, a gobeithio gweithio gyda ni i wneud gwelliannau. Bydd gweithredwyr ac uwch glinigwyr yno i wrando ar bryderon pobl a'u trafod. Bydd Cyngor Iechyd Cymuned ABM hefyd yn bresennol i gynnig cyngor annibynnol ar weithdrefnau cwyno.

Dyweddodd y Prif Weithredwr, Paul Roberts, er bod y rhan fwyaf o'r gofal yn ysbytai PABM o safon uchel, mae angen gwneud rhagor, a bod gwrando ar gleifion, eu teuluoedd a'u gofalcwyr yn hanfodol. Esboniodd:

"Rydym ni am gwrdd â chleifion, perthnasau a gofalcwyr sydd â phryderon difrifol ynghylch gofal ac sy'n teimlo nad ydyn nhw wedi cael yr atebion sydd eu hangen arnyn nhw. Byddwn ni'n gwrando a dysgu oddi wrthyn nhw, a gobeithio bydd rhai hefyd yn cytuno i weithio gyda ni i wneud newidiadau. Bydd persbectifau'r cleifion a'r teuluoedd wrth wraidd y gwelliannau."

Bydd y clinigau pryderon cyntaf yn cael eu cynnal yn **Ysbyty Tywysoges Cymru** ym Mhen-y-bont ar Ogwr rhwng **5pm a 7.30pm** ar y dyddiadau canlynol:

Dydd Llun, 24 Chwefror 2014, a Dydd Iau, 27 Chwefror 2014
Dydd Mawrth, 4 Mawrth 2014, a Dydd Mercher 5 Mawrth 2014



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Os hoffech ddod, cysylltwch â ni i drefnu apwyntiad. Gallwch ffonio hefyd (oriau swyddfa) 01656 754194. Neu, anfonwch e-bost ABM.chiefexec@wales.nhs.uk

Byddwn yn cyhoeddi clinigau eraill mewn ysbytai PABM eraill cyn bo hir.



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Margaret Wilkinson**
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mae'n bleser mawr gennyl gefnogi
Ymgyrch Cennin Pedr Gofal
Canser Marie Curie

'ALL WE NEED IS A COUPLE OF HOURS OF YOUR TIME'

Charity needs local volunteers to help the Daffodil Appeal

MARIE CURIE Cancer Care is appealing for people in the Vale of Glamorgan to donate an hour of their time this February and March to collect for the charity's annual Great Daffodil Appeal.

The appeal is Marie Curie's biggest fundraiser, which encourages everyone to give a donation and wear a daffodil pin in February and March.

The charity needs volunteer collectors to encourage people in the local community to wear a that daffodil pin and make that donation.

The money raised will help Marie Curie Nurses provide more free care to local people with terminal illnesses in their own homes and in the local Marie Curie Hospice.

Helen Mulhern, community fundraiser for Marie Curie Cancer Care, explained: "We need hundreds of people from all over south Wales to help with our collections this February and March.

"Donating just one or two hours of your time to the appeal will allow Marie Curie nurses provide more free care to terminally ill people and their families at the time when they most need support."

Marie Curie runs nine hospices nationwide and is a leader in research into the best ways of caring for people with terminal illness.

In addition to this, the charity designs and advises on end of life services and works to ensure that the best possible care and patient choice is at the heart of commissioning end of life care across the United Kingdom.

All Marie Curie services are completely free of charge. Around 70 per cent of the charity's income comes from donations with the balance of funds coming from the NHS.

To volunteer to collect for Marie Curie Cancer Care and support the Great Daffodil Appeal call the fundraising office on 02920 426068 or visit the website at: www.mariecurie.org.uk/daffodil; like Marie Curie at: www.facebook.com/mariecurieuk.



Can YOU help out Marie Curie?

IAM appealing to your readers to volunteer for Marie Curie Cancer Care's Great Daffodil Appeal, and help people with terminal illnesses in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan get the care they need.

We're looking for people who can donate an hour or two of their time to collect for Marie Curie by simply giving out daffodil pins in return for donations. We have a street collection in Barry Town Centre from Saturday February 22 to Saturday March 1, and we need as many volunteers as possible to help. We also have lots of other collections in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan if you are unable to collect at

Barry Town Centre.

Marie Curie Nurses provide free care to people with terminal illnesses at the Marie Curie Hospice, Cardiff and the Vale. To ensure we can continue to provide this vital care we need people to help make this year's Great Daffodil Appeal a great success.

If you're able to donate a few hours to help someone in their final hours then please contact me on 02920 426068 or email Georgina.Burke@mariecurie.org.uk.

Thank you for your support.

GEORGINA BURKE,
(Community Fundraiser, Marie Curie Hospice, Cardiff and the Vale).

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Out and About with The GEM

What's On IN BRIEF

Welsh Hearts free training
WELSH Hearts are holding a FREE training session for two hours on Monday, February 17 at The King's Cup pub, The Square, St Athan from 7pm - 9pm.

To book a place contact 02920 786521 or email fundraising@welsh-hearts.org.

Local PACT meetings
CASTLELAND PACT, The Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry, February 17 at 7pm.

LLANDOUGH PACT, The Royal British Legion, Penlan Road, Llandough, February 17 at 7pm.

Coffee and chat meeting, The Blue Anchor, East Aberthaw near Rhose on February 25, 11am.

Coffee and chat meeting, The Red Lion, Bonvilston on February 25, at 11am.

Women's arts exhibition
THE Women's Arts Association is celebrating International Women's Day on March 8 at Art Central gallery in Barry, with an exhibition of art works and a beginner's writing workshop. On Saturday,

February 15, Bristol-based writer Meg Kingston will be presenting a 'read, write, edit' workshop at the gallery from 1.30pm. Tickets cost £4 which includes a drink and cake.

The Women's Arts exhibition will be at Art Central, Town Hall, King Square, Barry CF63 4RW from February 17 - March 22, from 10am - 4pm.

For more information about the 'read, write, edit' workshop, Women's Arts Association exhibition, or Art Central Gallery, contact 01446 422428. Or visit www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk - Enjoy Arts and Culture.

NHS breast screening
THE Breast Test Wales mobile screening unit will be at the Memorial Hall, Barry, from March 3 to the end of May.

Women who are aged over 70 will not automatically be invited for breast screening, but can request an appointment by telephoning Breast Test Wales on 029 2039 7222.

For more information, contact your GP practice or telephone Breast Test Wales on 029 2039 7222.

'Heritage museum needs our support'

WRITE in support of the Glamorgan Wartime Heritage Museum based in Barry, at the Barry Island Railway Station venue.

The museum is asking to use the existing tourist information centre on the island - and this would be an ideal site, if it is available.

But it is not the only building in Barry standing empty. A few yards away from the museum is the old pumping station; restored at public expense, this building has been standing empty since the work was completed.

This year marks the centenary of the Great War and during the coming months the Heritage Museum will no doubt play a large part in commemorative events. Ade Pitman and her team of volunteers have created a badly-needed museum here in Barry. It falls to the council, and all of us, to give them all the support we can.

David Lloyd, Barry.



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McConaughey shines in Dallas Buyers Club

THERE was a troubling spell, around 2009, where the promise of Matthew McConaughey's acting career was on the precipice of disappearing.

Phoning in his laconic charm to serve weak romantic 'comedies' like *Ghosts Of Girlfriends Past* and *Failure To Launch*, and perfunctory action fare like *Fools Gold* and *Sahara*, McConaughey seemed destined to forever be filled under failing to live up to his talents.

But then he hit a hot streak, starting with 2011's *The Lincoln Lawyer*, which has shown little signs of stopping. He has been Oscar nominated for his latest performance in *Dallas Buyers Club*.

Based on a true story, McConaughey plays Ron Woodruff, a man who is diagnosed with AIDS. Stunned at the battle, and costs, of medication, Woodruff takes the medication into his own hands, travelling over the border to Mexico, in order to help himself, and other sufferers - but Woodruff's plans are constantly under the gaze of those who aren't keen on his 'Robin Hood' mentality...

While Oscar season often sees true-life stories come to the fore, the tale of Ron Woodruff is

certainly one that deserves to be told, especially seeing as a man whose later life was a battle on behalf of those unfortunate to be diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, came from such a low-key background.

There is more than a hint of Robin Hood about the character of Woodruff - and indeed, screenwriters Melissa Wallack and Craig Borten amp up the narrative drive of this being a man battling against 'the man', or larger elements that are unable or unwilling to do what should be the right thing.

But more than that, *Dallas Buyers Club* is a film about a man whose life change comes as a knock-on effect of his brush with mortality - whose desire to do good comes from, at its core, the urge to help himself.

While Woodruff is deservedly celebrated for what he achieved, the film rarely depicts its protagonist as the hero, instead focusing on the humanity of his character and how he develops into someone attempting to battle the system.

With his desperately slim frame (having lost a large amount of weight for the role) Matthew McConaughey may be ticking the Oscar checklist; but this is a performance that is gritty, real and wonderfully engaging. There's no



by GARETH JAMIESON
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award-chasing here from the actor, whose fine run of form just keeps coming.

His natural charisma comes to the fore, but as Woodruff battles the perceptions of the disease he's been diagnosed with (face masks and people being afraid of his spit just two examples); and he starts to realise the severity of the hand he's been dealt with, the surface bluster blows away and McConaughey's performance captures the fragility of the situation achingly well.

While the rest of the cast all deliver good performances, Jared Leto is easily the pick of the bunch as transgender Rayon, a character who falls into Woodruff's life but whose plight and situation make him the perfect foil as they form an odd couple alliance.

Leto is a very underrated actor, but deserves the plaudits he's been receiving here, for the performance is one of strength and courage in saddening circumstance that refuses to paint the character as a victim. Instead, Leto is as vivid

and full of life as can be, his mortality something that lingers subtly in the background.

Jean-Marc Vallee's direction is beautifully low-key, focusing on the gritty trailer trash Woodruff and company emanate from, the location becoming a character in itself as the parched visuals marry perfectly with the subject material.

He infuses the material with moments of wonder and quiet emotion, rather than plug too deeply into melodrama, Vallee concentrating on life rather than death, lending the film a wonderful degree of warmth amidst the physical and legal battles.

With a sense of gallows humour, and the focus on the indefatigable human spirit, there is much to like and admire about *Dallas Buyers Club*. Its sentiment isn't cheap, its warmth is hard-earned - but it makes you feel, and delivers plenty of substance in telling a most beguiling, and uplifting story.

VERDICT - A wonderfully engaging film, *Dallas Buyers Club* houses yet another superb turn by Matthew McConaughey and a surprisingly robust, yet tender, support role from Jared Leto. Yet beneath the performances is a story deftly told, full of emotion and fire, but without offering easy platitudes, wonderfully directed by Jean-Marc Vallee; a superb piece of filmmaking.

Highly recommended. SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED: *Erin Brockovich* (2000), *Milk* (2008)

The Billy Fury phenomenon

ONE of the best-selling recording artists of the 1960s, Billy Fury enjoyed a string of hit singles totalling a remarkable 332 weeks in the British charts.

Health problems since childhood led to the singer's untimely death on January 28, 1983, but it is reassuring to know that his name and music is not forgotten. The *Billy Fury Years* is quite simply 'The Ultimate Billy Fury show to ever hit the stage'.

Hailed as "the best Fury since Fury", Michael King and his talented group of musicians take a journey through the musical career of Britain's best loved rock 'n roll legend.

The two-hour show is filled with Billy Fury's greatest hits, delivered live in true Fury style.

Billy Fury was born Ronald William Wycherley, in Liverpool on April 17, 1940. He was an internationally successful British pop singer from the late 1950s to

the early 1960s, and remained an active songwriter until the 1980s. Rheumatic fever, which damaged his heart, contributed to his death in 1983.

In the 1960s, Fury had more Decca hits than any other artist, including the Rolling Stones. He equalled The Beatles' record of 24 hits and spent a total of 332 weeks on the UK charts.



Valeways walks

ON Tuesday, February 18 at 1.30pm, 'Lakes and countryside', starting at Cosmeston Country Park visitor centre.

Also on February 18 at 2pm, the coffee shop strollers meet at Cosmeston Country Park visitor centre.

On Wednesday, February 19 at 10.30am, the coffee shop strollers meet at Romilly Cafe, Cold Knap, Barry.

On Thursday, February 20 at 10.30am, the coffee shop strollers meet at Rhose railway station car park.

On Sunday, February 23, 10yb, 'Siambir Gladdu Tinkinswood' yn Red Lion maes parcio, St Nicholas.

Ten top tenors in charity gala

THE Ten Welsh Tenors are back for a special gala charity concert.

Wynne Evans, Rhys Meirion, Aled Hall, Alun Rhys Jenkins, Richard Allen, Joshua Owen Mills, Sam Furness, Elgan Llyr Thomas, Trystan Llyr Griffiths and Huw Llywelyn, will

be joining forces at St David's Hall, Cardiff on Sunday, February 16 at 7pm.

"When all ten join together to sing Nessun Dorma, the hairs on the back of your neck are guaranteed to stand up - there's nothing quite like it", said Sharon Owen, chief executive of Welsh Hearts charity set up to fund the widespread provision of defibrillators across Wales.

Joining the ten Welsh tenors are sopranos Naomi Harvey, Nuccia Focile, Claire Hampton and Fiona Harrison. Keeping them company on stage are the award winning choir 'Cor CFI' and accompanists Caradog Williams and Jeff Howard.

Tickets from £10, available on 02920 878444. All proceeds will go towards Welsh Hearts 'Dai Fib' appeal - funding for defibrillators throughout Wales.



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Michelle G Richards
who correctly answered last week's question in The GEM. The answer was:
Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit

Our lucky winning reader, chosen at random wins a £25 prize voucher to spend with any advertiser in last week's GEM.

Our lucky winner has chosen to spend their prize with...

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The competition runs every week throughout 2014 with a potential prize fund of £1,150.

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MAKING YOUR HOUSE A HOME



MAKING YOUR HOUSE A HOME

TIPS on how we can protect our plants from the worst of the weather - plus, find out what else needs doing in the garden this week.

by HANNAH STEPHENSON
WHILE the incessant rain may have left gardeners' water butts overflowing, it has also inevitably claimed its share of casualties.

Waterlogged plants, nutrients leached from the soil and pest and disease problems can all result from consistently wet conditions, and those gardeners with poor drainage systems are likely to be the hardest hit.

When soil is waterlogged, plants literally drown. Water fills all the air spaces between the soil particles and this prevents oxygen from reaching the roots.

In turn, this causes the soil to stagnate and prevents root growth.

If plants look a bit sickly after a week or two of solid rain, the minerals may have been washed away. Restore the vigour of plants by giving them a dose of liquid seaweed fertiliser.

"It's absolutely vital that one doesn't walk on the soil when it's this wet because you compact it and destroy its structure."

"Don't dig it or dis-

turb it but leave it to its own devices until the tide goes out," says Guy Barter, head of RHS advisory service.

Plants likely to be worst affected include those from dry climates such as lavender and rosemary, while lawns can also suffer as a result of excessively wet weather, he notes.

Don't mow the lawn in wet weather or even walk on it, as the pressure can cause structural damage, especially to those grown from seed in spring. Most established lawns can cope with excessive rainfall.

Mr Barter advises gardeners to shelter pots of lavender and other container plants by a wall, or even put waterlogged pots on their side for a few days to allow them to drain a little. You may need to repot them in the spring, as the compost may be spent.

However, the wet weather isn't all doom and gloom for gardeners.

"Paradoxically, lawns will be growing in these temperatures," points out Guy Barter.

"In the vegetable garden, vegetables will still be growing, so leeks will thrive and cabbages will still be swelling slowly through this weather. By April, many things will have come good."

Bulbs shouldn't be affected by the continuous rainfall either, he says.

"They are really good at surviving this sort of thing. Snowdrops and daffodils in particular are excellent at adapting. Bulbs are generally very tolerant of wet soil."

"We might even get a better show of bulbs because in conditions like this they will be photosynthesising in the increased light as the year progresses."

Herbaceous perennials renew a large part of their root system annually, so they can recover from soggy conditions.

Perennials also have shallow root systems so they can flourish in situations with a high water table.

Most, including those such as hardy geraniums and autumn-flowing asters, that do not

normally live in wet environments can cope well with wet conditions.

Plants with big, lush green leaves thrive in really wet weather. Rodgersias, rheum (ornamental rhubarb) and hostas are well-known moisture lovers. Conversely, avoid anything with small, leathery or grey leaves.

Alpines, particularly the succulent ones or those with hairy leaves such as sedums and some sempervivums (houseleeks), are vulnerable to wet weather, so if you haven't yet covered them with cloches, do so before it's too late.

Don't plant bare-root shrubs such as roses until the soil has dried out a little, Barter advises.

"Gardeners will have rose bushes and trees and fruit bushes and turf ready to go out and they must keep that protected, because it will be a rush trying to get everything planted when the soil finally dries up in February, March or even April. Gardeners need to keep their new

plants in good condition ready for the happy day when they can put them out," he says.

Anyone who has bought a bare-root plant should make sure the roots don't dry out in the meantime, he urges. "Take it out of the packaging and pot it up or wrap it in wet newspaper or straw, put a plastic bag over the roots and leave it in a shed ready to go out in its final position later on."

While fruit trees love the moisture, the relatively warm weather may lead to earlier blossom, not a good thing in our climate, because of the late frosts we so often suffer.

Gardeners who want to avoid too many casualties in future years may consider building raised beds, improving soil drainage and planting species which are happy in wet weather.

It may be worth thinking about creating a bog garden too, which has the added bonus of attracting wildlife - plant irises, carex, gunnera, primulas, hostas, rheum and rodgersia.

work at this time of year because the slugs aren't moving enough to find them."

Some diseases such as leaf spots persist on plants which are in leaf during wet weather. If you find outbreaks, prune out infected material.

Lastly, as the rain will have washed many of the nutrients out of the soil, give it a pick-me-up with a fertiliser rich in potassium, such as sulphate of potash or rose fertiliser, and your plants should come through the torrent of rain with few problems.

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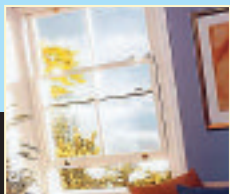
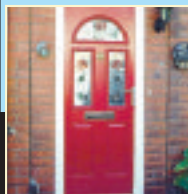
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'USE TREES TO COMBAT FLOODS'

says the Woodland Trust (Coed Cadw)

ANGHARAD EVANS of the Woodland Trust (Coed Cadw) last week handed over a petition bearing 2,700 names, calling on the Assembly and the Welsh Government to support the planting of 10 million trees across Wales, in places where they will do most to reduce flood risk.

The names were collected online and at various shows and events last year. To coincide with this, the Trust is also publishing a major report, 'Holding back the waters', showing the huge potential for the Welsh Government and its new environmental

body Natural Resources Wales, to use woodlands and trees as an effective, and cost effective, means of reducing flood risk to some of the 357,000 properties in Wales, a sixth of the building stock, that are currently at risk from flooding – alongside more traditional hard engineering flood defences where appropriate.

Jerry Langford,

Wales director of the Woodland Trust said: "I'm delighted to announce that we in the Woodland Trust are ready to put our money where our mouth is and provide £20,000 towards the cost of a scheme, or schemes, in Wales, which can help demonstrate the effectiveness of using trees to reduce flood risk and improve water quality."

MEET BART, DAI, HONEY AND DUSTY!

TO celebrate national nest box week (February 14 – 21) rangers will be holding a bird box-making session at the Forest Lodge, Porthkerry Country Park, on February 15, and at Cosmeston on February 16.

Sessions at both venues will be run between 11am and 2pm. Owls4U will also be on site to display and talk about their rescued owls Bart, Dai, Honey and Dusty. There is no charge for the owl display; however, Owls4U would be grateful for any donations on the day.

It will cost £4 to make your own box and you can also buy pre-constructed boxes for £5 each.

GIVE YOUR HOME A NEW LOOK BY DECLUTTERING!

Why wait until spring for a clear-out? Decluttering with some clever storage solutions could bring calm and harmony into your home, says **GABRIELLE FAGAN**.

It's not unusual at this time of year to feel as though your possessions are winning the space war and you're being squeezed out.

But of all the aspirational (if unrealistic) goals we set ourselves, decluttering and getting your house organised is, arguably, the most achievable.

Nothing acts more like a tonic for the hungover soul than a jolly good tidy," says Barbara Genda, founder and principal designer at Barbara Genda Bespoke Furniture.

"Research suggests that clutter and mess causes us untold stress. Stuffed cupboards, dishevelled drawers, haphazardly strewn and displaced possessions without a designated 'living' space all culminate into a loud, unrelenting visual 'noise' that can make us feel boxed-in, overwhelmed and even anxious."

Luckily, there are a multitude

of solutions for organising mess – particularly if you're a natural hoarder – from stackable boxes to sophisticated storage systems.

"Pack all of that mess away and immediately you'll discern the positive effects."

"You'll have a calmer environment in which you can relax, be productive and at the very least, think straight," she says.

Things you can do

Under-stairs sort-out

"Under the stairs is the definitive dumping ground for assorted, unused odds and ends," says Genda.

"Often, you can't seem to open the door without a golf bag spilling heavy clubs onto your feet, or a sea of shoes tumbling out."

Top tip: As a short-term solution, put hooks inside the cupboard door for hanging up bags and get transparent boxes for larger items, so they stay dust free and you can view contents without having to rummage.

Free-up living space

"Decluttering isn't about throwing everything away," says Simon Glanville, managing director of storage specialists, Store.

"It's about losing what's use-

less and ugly in order to have space for things that are useful and beautiful. But it's easy to feel overwhelmed and keep putting off that clear-up," he adds.

"Start with one single drawer or shelf at a time. Set a timer for 20 minutes and stop when the alarm goes off."

"Always tidy up first thing in the morning, so once the chore is done, you're free to enjoy the rest of your day."

Top tip: Always de-clutter before buying new storage, otherwise you won't know the right solution for your needs.

Explore under-used spaces, like landings, and consider boarding a loft so you can store seasonal items.

Book lovers

"Books can look beautiful when displayed properly so avoid stacking them too deep, or leaving them in piles everywhere," says Marianne Shillingford, creative director and head of the design service at Dulux.

"You can work on the principle that if you haven't looked at individual titles in a couple of years, you're probably unlikely to read them again, and some could be consigned to a charity shop."

"Store books so you can find

them easily – alphabetically, by genre or those you've recently read. Look for different ways to display them; shelves over and around doorways look particularly effective."

Top tip: Paint an old bookcase, or look on eBay, Freecycle or local charity shops for second hand ones and do a make over. Fashionable, low mid-century sideboards work well too.

Uncork a solution

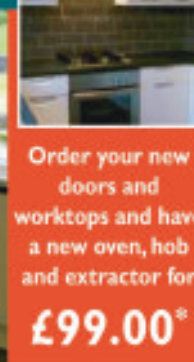
Those who take their wine seriously realise the need to store bottles correctly, while even if you have half a dozen bottles kept aside they can take up room.

A recent survey by self storage service, LoveSpace, found around 20 per cent of Britons have wine storage on their wish-list, and nearly 18 per cent want a mini-bar.

"Streamlining your interior to make the best use of your space will work wonders on a room," says Claire Hornby, creative stylist at Barker & Stonehouse.

"A crate, or a bespoke wine cupboard if you have room, will avoid breakages and allow you to manage a growing collection which can gather dust and look unattractive if it's just standing on a shelf or cupboard surface."

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COMPANIES SET HIGH STANDARDS IN LOCAL BUILDING EXCELLENCE



ABOVE: Phil Webley of WW Building was commended, and his award was collected from the Vale Mayor, Coun Margaret Wilkinson, by Charles Hunter, principal building control office, and Jan Irving of The Glamorgan GEM.



ABOVE: Taylor Wimpey were winners of the best housing over eight dwellings section. Site manger Bridget Penman is pictured with Nina Chivers of Nina Estate Agents.

LEFT: Westgate Building Services were commended and a representative is pictured with Coun Fred Johnson and Nina Chivers.

RIGHT: WJ James were the winners of the best conversion category. Pictured (left to right) are Coun Lis Burnett, architect Richard Crockett, and Mr Cooper of WJ James, and Mr Thomas.



ABOVE: Vale Mayor, Margaret Wilkinson, and Jan Irving of The GEM (on right) with Mr and Mrs Smith, winners of the best extension category.



THE eleventh Vale of Glamorgan Council Building Control Group 'Building Excellence' awards were presented at the Mount Sorrel Hotel, Barry, on January 31.

The evening was attended by Coun Lis Burnett, cabinet member for regeneration, innovation and planning and transportation, Coun Fred Johnson, chairman of the planning committee and the Mayor of the Vale, Coun Margaret Wilkinson.

Also present were Rob Thomas, the director of development services for the council, and the Building Control team, together with the sponsors of the event, Mount Sorrel Hotel, Jan Irving of the Glamorgan GEM, Nina and Rob of Nina Estate Agents, Paul and Helen Thomas of ACD Recycling and Skip Hire, and GreenBuild Consult.

The evening was hosted by Marcus Goldsworthy, the operational manager for development and building control at the Vale Council.

Mr Goldsworthy remarked: "The nominations in every category were of the very highest quality and I congratulate all the winners, who will now have the chance to compete against the winners from other councils in south Wales in the 'South Wales Building Excellence' awards 2014 at the Vale of Glamorgan Hotel and Spa Resort, Hensol, on April 25, hosted by Owen Money.

"I am also hopeful that some of these schemes will go forward to the 'Building Excellence' award national finals, in London in November, especially as we were lucky enough to have a national winner in 2013.

"The awards have shown the quality of work undertaken throughout the Vale, and we are proud to be rewarding and encouraging quality in the construction industry.

Our thanks must also go out to the sponsors, who have enabled the event to be firmly placed in the annual diary."

The evening also raised a massive £500 on the night for MacMillan Cancer Group.

Highly Commended and the award winners who will go forward to the South Wales event are:

Extension/alteration to a dwelling
Steve Smith for the extension and renovations at 7 Smithies Avenue, Sully

Best Conversion
W. J. James & Sons, for the barn conversion to holiday lets, at Sutton Farm

Best Housing over eight dwellings
Taylor Wimpey Developments South Wales for the development at Pencoeindre, Barry.

Best Craftsmanship
SJ Builders for various sites

Best Social Housing Development
Green Hill Construction for the development at Merthyr Street, Barry

Best Partnership Scheme
Newydd Housing Association with Tony King Architects

The Vale Council said it wished all of the above schemes good luck in progressing to the National Awards Finals.



ABOVE: Maria Webber accepted the award for Wayne Moore Construction and architect Christian Le Guilcher who were both commended.



ABOVE: Ray Baker Architects were commended, and their representative is pictured with Coun Lis Burnett and Mr Thomas of ACD Recycling and Skip Hire.



ABOVE: Gareth Davies of Greenbuild Consult (left) with John Webb of JCW Developments – commended in the awards – and Charles Hunter (right).



ABOVE: Representatives of Neil Smith and Co, who were commended.



ABOVE: Steve James of SJ Builders, winner of the best craftsmanship award, with Charles Hunter.



LEFT (left to right): Gareth Davies; a representative of Gibbon Brothers (commended); Richard Crockett (architect).



LEFT: Rob Thomas (left) and the Mayor with representatives of Green Hill Construction, winners of the best social housing development.

Penarth Computer Club – more hints and tips

I PREVIOUSLY noted that the third golden rule of using computers is 'keep learning'; our talk showed 10 useful things new users could benefit from learning (and long-standing users revising). There are many more tips, of course, and we will look at more as we go.

So far, we have aimed at enabling users to get things done. Once the basics are mastered and we can actually do something useful, the novelty wears off a little and we notice the little niggles of repeated tasks and interruptions and delays. Something can be done about that.

For example, breaking off from your work need not be a big bother.

For short or sudden breaks, I offered the tip that holding down the Windows key and pressing L (Win+L) will instantly show only a log-on window that requires a password.

Your work is not exposed. When you re-start, entering your password will return you to the place where you left off and all ready to continue.

For longer interruptions, you can get the same service. Instead of closing any files or applications, simply select the Hibernate option instead of Shut Down. Once the computer has hibernated it can be switched off completely and still keep everything ready to resume once it is switched on and the password entered. All the applications and documents that were open when it hibernated will be reopened exactly as they were previously and you can resume precisely where you left off.

When you get used to the construction of a document or a spreadsheet, it is worth applying some formatting for emphasis. This could be putting a paragraph in a different font, or colour or *italics*, or **emboldened** or underlined or a different size – or any combination of them. You might want to apply special formats or borders to a table or to cells in a spreadsheet. The process might take a bit of time to get the effect required and might involve several settings applied to the same text or object.

But what if you decide you would like to repeat the exercise in several places? The last thing you fancy doing is repeating all the work you did to set up the special appearance. You don't have to work so hard.

Simply click on any piece of the already-formatted text; click on the Format Painter button on the standard toolbar (it shows a paintbrush) and then highlight the text you want to 'paint'.

That text instantly takes on all the attributes of the original selection. The Format Painter is automatically cancelled.

If you want to repeat the process several times, double-click on Format Painter and it will paint each selection. Clicking Format Painter again cancels it.

Format Painter is a wonderful labour-saving button especially with Autosaves, but they deserve their own treatment.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday, February 25 at All Saints Lesser Hall, Victoria Square, Penarth, at 7.30pm for 8pm. Let's look at the stars with Mike J. Visitors always welcome. See penarthcomputerclub.co.uk.

Howard Desmond

NEW EXHIBITS ARRIVE AT BARRY TOURIST RAILWAY

THIS month, there have been new arrivals at Barry Tourist Railway – and one popular exhibit has returned home.

The unique steam railcar was taken back to its home at Churnet Valley Railway in Staffordshire, having been at Barry since last August.

Many visitors enjoyed rides along the lines at Barry and especially with Father Christmas last year. Last Friday (February 7) two additions to the collection of motive power arrived.

A former yellow maintenance unit from the Severn Tunnel, and a diesel unit from the Canton depot in Cardiff both arrived by road.

Report and photographs by Mike Wilcock.



ABOVE: A maintenance unit has arrived from the Severn Tunnel.



ABOVE: The steam railcar, which has now returned to Staffordshire.

Tragic legend behind the feast of St Valentine

FEBRUARY is the second month of the year on the Julian and Gregorian calendars, and it acquired its name from the Latin word februa – purification, superlatively making it a Roman month.

Along with January, February was not on the original datebook, but was added to the calendar by Numa Pompilius around 713BC.

In Welsh, the month of February is known as Y Mis Bach, which means little month as it is the only one to have 28 days. Chewfor is the equivalent in Welsh for this dreary time of year, as it is the shortest month except for leap year – which extends it to 29 every four years.

Around 400 years ago, February was called Feverell, and 100 years later it changed to Februer. February, as we spell it today, only came into existence around 100 years ago.

Sol-monarth was an Old English term for February which means mud month, as the weather is gloomy at this time of year. It is meteorologically the third and final month of the winter season.

Sol-monarth (cake month) was an ancient event where cakes were offered to the gods. It was also known as sprout and kale monarth, as planted cabbage and kale would begin to sprout.

The birthstone of February is the amethyst, its flowers the violet and common primrose and zodiac signs Aquarius (until 18th) and Pisces.

The Christian festival of Candlemas (festival of lights) is celebrated on the second day of the month. This was because during ancient times, the Christmas festival lasted for 40 days – until the second day in February.

It was a day when all candles to be used in churches for the year ahead would be lit and blessed, in the belief that the flames would protect its people against plague, illness and famine.

In ancient times, it was known as the Feast of Lights, in celebration of the increasing strength of the sun as winter gives way to spring.

Superstitious rituals were performed from 12 to 14 as it was believed that these dates were borrowed from January. If they were stormy days, the weather for the year ahead would be good; whereas if fine weather prevailed the climate would be unpleasant.

The renowned snow-drop begins to appear

around landscapes in February. This beautiful white flower is believed to have evolved when Adam and Eve were expelled from The Garden of Eden. This was because an angel appeared to give Eve hope and guidance.

In the hope of banishing cold winters, the angel transformed snowflakes into flowers, proving that winter does eventually end and that spring is around the corner.

This can be seen in the old rhyme: 'The snowdrop, in purest white array, first rears its head on Candlemas day'.

On February 8, 1855, the people of our country were petrified one morning to discover peculiar footprints in the snow in the shape of a cloven hoof. Could they have been terrified because this was deemed as a sign that the devil had visited earth and could cast his spell of evil amongst humankind?

The most famous date in February is the 14th, the feast of St Valentine, which is celebrated in many countries around the world.

There are a few variations as to who St Valentine actually was; but the most likely was in honour of the individual who took it upon himself to challenge a Roman Emperor who banned soldiers from marrying during the third century.

He became a campaigner for the soldiers, but was executed for his outspokenness in 469AD. Pope Gelasius declared this date in honour of St Valentine.

Another legend states that St Valentine was executed for his Christian beliefs and before he died, he penned a note to his lover saying 'From Your Valentine'.

The day became associated with romance some time in the Middle Ages.

Shakespeare's quote from his tragic play Romeo and Juliet seems to celebrate love in an adoring fashion:

'Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs; being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes; being vex'd a sea nourish'd with lovers' tears: what is it else? a madness most discreet, A choking gall and a

preserving sweet.'

The Romans and Celts observed February as the start of the spring season.

Shrove Tuesday is a tradition hailing the day before Lent, with the fasting custom marking 40 days before Easter.

Also known as Mischief Day, it was a time when church bells would ring out, a game of football was played by all and feasting and revelry were celebrated. Shrove Tuesday 2014 falls on March 4.

Ash Wednesday was named after the ash tree when schoolchildren would carry a piece of twig in their pocket for luck. Failure to carry out this tradition would result in their feet being trodden on.

The Friday following Ash Wednesday was once called Kissing Friday. It was a day when schoolboys were allowed to kiss girls without fear of punishment. This custom lasted until the 1940s, when the war years wilted it away.

But fact or fiction? Only you can decide ...

Hayley Williams
hayley.williams550@yahoo.com



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Tory councillors launch anti-merger petition

THE leader of the Vale of Glamorgan Conservative Group has launched a petition rejecting a suggested merger of the local authority with neighbouring Cardiff.

It follows the publishing of a report commissioned by the Welsh Government which recommended the merger as part of controversial plans to reduce the number of local authorities in Wales.

The petition is available online at - <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/handsoffthevale>.

Conservative group leader, Coun John Thomas, said: "When the Williams Commission was established we were keen to look with an open mind at what proposals were brought forward.

"The cost of politics does need to be reduced and public services must be delivered efficiently and effectively in the best possible way to meet the needs of local residents.

"However, in the case of the Vale, the Conservative council group are clear that we do not believe a merger with Cardiff would be in the best interests of residents. The Vale is a self-sufficient local authority which, broadly speaking, delivers excellent services to its residents.

"While mergers may be appropriate for some councils in certain cases, the Vale does not habitually under-perform and has never been in danger of slipping into 'special measures' like some other authorities.

"We are clear that there is no local need or desire to take the decision-making process away from locally-elected and accountable councillors."

Coun Thomas added: "Naturally, it is a matter for other local parties to make their own views clear on the findings of this report, but I sincerely hope that we get broad support for this petition, which strongly rejects any Welsh Government moves to merge the Vale with Cardiff."

Young entrepreneurs are set to put business skills to the test in Cardiff...

STUDENTS from Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg will be competing to be crowned the Welsh winners of this

year's Coca-Cola Enterprises Real Business Challenge (RBC).

The challenge is a national enterprise initiative for year-10 stu-

dents. It has been running in Wales since 2009. The programme is linked to the curriculum and challenges students to work in teams to tackle a business task set by the organisers.

Over 45 schools from across Wales entered the enterprise-themed competition this year, with ten chosen to battle it out in the Wales final at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff today, Thursday, February 13.

The winner will represent Wales in the Great Britain final in London on March 25.

Vale AM Jane Hutt said: "Well done, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg, who have clearly demonstrated considerable business acumen and initiative to have made it this far in the challenge. Good luck!"

TRAINER TIM'S ON A PANEL

ABERTHIN trainer Tim Vaughan and top National Hunt jockey Richard Johnson will be joining racecourse commentator Tony Ennis at a charity Cheltenham Festival preview evening at 7.30pm on Monday, March 3, at Ton Pentre Football Club in the Rhondda Valley.

All money raised will go to the Riding School For The Disabled.

Admission is £10 and tickets can be obtained from the event organiser, Keven Moon, on 07506952368.

Councillor helps raise funds to boost the kitty!



ABOVE: Coun Ian Hibble, with a furry friend, hands over a cheque to the Cats Adoption Centre. Photo by Mandy Thomas; www.mandythomasphotography.co.uk.

CAT-LOVING Coun Ian Hibble visited Bridgend Adoption Centre to hand over a cheque on behalf of Brackla Community Council for £223.13, after making Cats Protection one of his charities of the year.

Sue Dobbs, centre manager, said: "We are a very busy adoption centre and achieve incredible results finding loving homes for more than 1,250 cats and kittens every year.

"However, we constantly need to raise additional funds to ensure we maintain the highest standards of care of all our cats.

"We are very grateful to Coun Ian Hibble for raising money on our behalf. If we didn't receive such wonderful support from our local community, so many more cats would remain needlessly homeless," she added.

Honest finder returned ring

READING last week's GEM about Georgia Thomas' appeal for the return of her handbag has made me put pen to paper to relate an incident that happened to me.

On Thursday, February 6, I shopped at Lidl in Barry and on my return home, discovered that my signet ring was not on my hand.

On Friday morning, I returned to Lidl to enquire if a ring had been found. I suspected

The money was raised during events in Brackla including a fun day and firework display. The events were organised and run by the people of Brackla.

Coun Hibble said: "My own cat Patrick came from Cats Protection; it is a pleasure to be able to support this vital charity as one of my charities as chair of Brackla Community Centre, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the community of Brackla for their generous support."

Bridgend adoption centre holds over 200 cats and kittens and currently has over 80 cats ready for adoption.

To offer a kitty a home, please telephone 01656 724396 or visit: bridgend.cat.org.uk

For further information, please contact Sue Dobbs on 01656 726621 or email: bridgend.manager@cat.s.org.uk

LETTER

that in taking my gloves off while shopping, the ring could have slipped off my finger.

To my great joy and relief, an assistant went to look and returned with my ring. Some kind soul had discovered it and handed it in to a member of the staff.

I would very much like to thank the person that handed it in, and I do hope that Georgia Thomas will be as lucky as me.
A Hughes, Penarth.

News in and out of the classroom at Barry Comprehensive School



ABOVE: Students from 7ANB with Cathy and Mojo in the school's learning resource centre.



ABOVE: Mr Fitzpatrick and Mr Jones with Nicholas displaying his award for excellence.

Engineering ace

B A R R Y Comprehensive School's Faculty of Technology has congratulated Nicholas Sherrin on receiving the South Wales Institute of Engineers Award for Excellence.

Nicholas was an outstanding GCSE pupil and has chosen to continue his studies in the Barry Sixth Form.

Meet the author

LAST term, year-7 students were invited to Barry library to meet authors Michelle Briscoe and Cathy Farr.

Each form class travelled down to the library where they met the author and were treated to a reading from their novel.

Students were given the chance to ask questions and find out what inspired both authors to

write their novels. They also had the opportunity to purchase a novel and have it signed by the author.

Cathy Farr, author of fantasy adventures *Moon Chase* and *Moon Crossing*, spoke to the pupils about her books and about how she became a writer. Some students were lucky enough to meet the inspiration behind her books – her Irish Wolfhound, Mojo!

Barry Library also promoted some of the great facilities they have for young people and encouraged pupils to join the library if they hadn't already.

The students thoroughly enjoyed the trip and we look forward to visiting the library again in the future.

7ANB had missed out on seeing Cathy and Mojo at Barry Library, so they made a special visit to the school, much to the delight of students and staff. AC

Dinas coffee morning

RESIDENTS are invited to a free coffee morning with local councillors this Saturday, February 15 in the Lee Hall, Britway Road, Dinas Powys starting at 11am.

This is an opportunity to raise matters of concern to people in Dinas Powys. Alternatively, local Plaid Councillors can be contacted directly - Chris Franks (07725 497 423), Val Hartrey (02920 513274), Keith Hatton (07749 825 751) and Chris Williams (02920 514166).

There are many hot topics to discuss affecting the community – ranging from the Cross Common Bridge, traffic issues and pressures on the Vale Council budget to the everyday issues such as road repairs. All are welcome.

'Centurions, prepare for the cricket nets!'

SULLY Centurions Cricket Club will be starting their indoor nets at 8.30pm on Thursday, February 20 at the Sports Centre, Colcot Road, Barry.

New members are always welcome, no matter what standard you play at.

Mad Hatter musical run scheduled for St Richard Gwyn

PUPILS in St Richard Gwyn High School, Barry, are putting on their latest school show – a musical version of Alice in Wonderland – next week over three nights, February 18, 19, and 20, at 7pm.

The musical, entitled Alice, has involved intensive rehearsals over a long period by pupils and staff. Tickets (£7 or £5) are available from the school on 01446 729250.

Did you know you can find The GEM on Facebook?
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£139,950**SOMERSET ROAD, BARRY**

Spacious living throughout, Edwardian semi detached, three reception rooms, replacement kitchen/breakfast, four bedrooms & additional attic/hobby area, sea views from rear, numerous basement rooms, enclosed rear garden, original features throughout. ER-D.

£224,950**BELL STREET, BARRY**

Mid terraced traditional, well presented, through living room, modern fitted kitchen, two bedrooms, spacious family bathroom, decked sun terrace, laid to lawn.

£109,950**TRINITY STREET, BARRY**

Three bedroomed mid terraced traditional, living room, wc cloakroom, kitchen/diner, enclosed rear garden, enclosed driveway, sea views over front, no chain.

£121,950**BRAMBLE AVENUE, BARRY**

Two bedroomed, semi detached, ensuite shower to master, living room, kitchen/diner, driveway/ample parking, garden backing onto open space, ideal first time buy.

£124,950**ROMILLY ROAD, BARRY**

Mid terraced traditional, living/dining, kitchen/utility area, sitting room, stairs to attic/hobby area, velux window, outbuilding to rear, no chain. ER-E.

£240,000**OLD MILL ROAD, BARRY**

Elevated spacious traditional dwelling, through living room, kitchen, utility, downstairs shower room, 1st floor bathroom, three bedrooms. ER-D.

£149,950**PORT ROAD EAST, BARRY**

Versatile living, three reception rooms and study, four bedrooms, four bathrooms, kitchen/diner, utility room, garage/drive, set in approx 3rd acre. ER-E.

£389,950**THE MEWS, BARRY**

Modern end of terraced, driveway to front, living room, kitchen, gch via combi boiler, town centre location, no chain.

£94,950**ENFIELD DRIVE, BARRY**

Mid terraced traditional, well presented, living room, modern fitted kitchen, integrated appliances, two bedrooms, views over Vale, enclosed rear garden, designated parking.

£127,950**BROAD STREET, BARRY**

Mid terraced traditional, bay fronted, three reception rooms, kitchen, wc, three bedrooms, 1st floor bathroom & walk in shower room, enclosed rear garden, no chain. ER-D.

£149,000**PENCOEDTRE ROAD, BARRY**

Spacious living accommodation, three reception rooms, conservatory, wc cloakroom, four double bedrooms, master bathroom with jacuzzi, more than ample parking, placed in private cul de sac, enclosed rear garden. ER-D.

£259,950**CARN Y EBOL, BARRY**

Modern detached, three/four bedrooms, living room, dining room, converted garage, master with ensuite, wc cloakroom, low maintenance garden, driveway providing parking. ER-D.

£194,950**CORNWALL ROAD, BARRY**

Three bedrooms, semi detached, living room, dining room, sun lounge, fitted kitchen, utility area, situated off Barry Road, low maintenance garden. ER-D.

£129,950**LYDSTEP ROAD, BARRY**

Two bed modern, end of link, living room, kitchen/breakfast, parking, enclosed garden, no chain.

£90,000**SALISBURY ROAD, BARRY**

Mid terraced traditional dwelling, backing onto Porthorri, extremely well presented, two reception rooms, fitted kitchen, two double bedrooms, spacious bathroom. ER-E.

£139,950**HEOL BROADLANDS, BARRY**

Corner positioned, three bedrooms, modern detached, living room, kitchen/diner, enclosed garden, garage. ER-C.

£174,950**BENECROFTE, RHOOSE**

Three bedrooms, modern detached, well presented, wc cloak, living room, conservatory, modern fitted kitchen, sitting room (converted garage), ensuite shower room, enclosed rear garden. ER-D.

£206,950**ROMILLY PARK ROAD, BARRY**

Edwardian semi detached, four reception rooms, three storey, five bedrooms, far reaching sea views, utility/pantry/cloakroom to ground floor, family bathroom to first floor. ER-E.

£369,950**WOODLANDS ROAD, BARRY**

Well presented, mid terraced traditional, living room, sitting room, dining room, wc cloakroom, fitted kitchen, three bedrooms, family bathroom, no chain. ER-D.

£139,950**JENNER COURT, BARRY**

Private road leading to modern detached, two bedrooms, wc cloak, living/dining room, enclosed rear garden, ample driveway. ER-C.

£132,000**COLCOT ROAD, BARRY**

Corner positioned, bay fronted semi detached, two double bedrooms, living room, fitted kitchen, wc cloakroom, garage/driveway, no chain. ER-C.

£124,950**VALE STREET, BARRY**

Corner positioned, well presented, mid terraced traditional, two reception rooms, fitted kitchen, two bedrooms, enclosed rear garden. ER-E.

£114,950**GLAN Y MOR, BARRY**

Top floor (5th Flr) apartment, separate private balcony, two bedrooms (master ensuite), far reaching views over water, lift, designated parking place, no chain. ER-C.

£124,950**COURT ROAD, BARRY**

Traditional mid terraced, spacious living, two reception rooms, four bedrooms, no chain, in need of some updating, walking distance to Town Centre. ER-E.

£99,950**5 VERONA STREET, BARRY,**

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By order of the mortgagees in possession, we would advise that an offer has been made for the above property in the sum of £41,000. Any person wishing to increase on this offer should notify the selling agents of their best offer during the course of the next 7 days or prior to exchange of contracts.

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£274,950**ADARY MOR, BARRY**

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£209,950**ST NICHOLAS ROAD, BARRY**

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3 Bedrooms
Conservatory, Combi GCH

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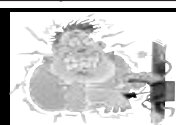
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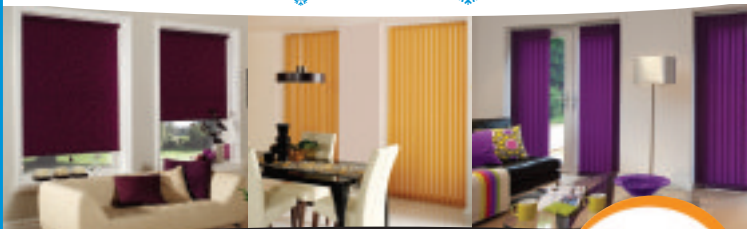
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Family Notices

PARRY May

Peacefully, fell asleep on the 1st February at the Princess of Wales, May of Llantwit Major. Reunited with Des (Matthews). Dearly loved mother of Margaret and Vance and daughter-in-law Carol, she was a loving grandmother and great grandmother, and a much loved sister and will be sadly missed.

Funeral service on Monday, 17th February 2014 in St. Illtud's Church, Llantwit Major at 2.00pm, followed by cremation at Coychurch Crematorium at 3.15pm. All enquiries to W.A. Brown & Son 01446 792489.

LAMB Anne

On January 29 at UHW, Cardiff, suddenly, but peacefully, in the presence of her family, Nancy of Rhose. Loving wife of her late husband Jock, dearly loved mum, cherished nan and grandma.

Resting at the Private Funeral Home of W James & Sons, Fommon. Funeral Monday, February 17, service 11.30am at Penmark Church, followed by cremation at Cardiff & Glamorgan Crematorium, Barry at 12.45pm. Flowers may be sent to the Funeral Home.

CLEAVE Emma Elizabeth (Betty)

Peacefully on 4 February at Springbank nursing home Barry. Emma Elizabeth (Betty) aged 90 years formerly of Somerset Road West, Barry. Mayor of Barry 1996-1997, beloved wife of the late Harry. Beloved mother, grandmother and great grandmother. Betty will be sadly missed by all her family and friends in Wales, Australia and England.

Resting at A.G. Adams & Son Funeral Home, Gladstone Road, Barry, where flowers may be sent until the funeral on Thursday 20 February. Service in the chapel at 11.30am, afterwards interment at Barry cemetery.

POWELL Margaret Ann

Passed away peacefully on the 3rd February in the Princess of Wales Hospital, Peggy of Llanblethian. Wife of the late Eric and dearly loved mother of Roger.

Resting at W.A. Brown & Son, College Street, Llantwit Major until the funeral service in St John the Baptist Church Llanblethian on Tuesday, 18th February at 12.30pm, followed by cremation at Coychurch at 1.45pm. Donations may be made to Parkinsons Disease Society or Red Cross c/o the Funeral Director (cheques only please).

NORTHWAY William Job (Bill)

Passed away on 4th February 2014 on his 81st birthday at the Princess of Wales Hospital. Darling husband of Eunice, adored father of Jane, Esther and Caroline and father-in-law of Tosh, Mike and Tiernan. Much loved grandfather of Rachel, Rob, Cath, Kat, Dave, Samantha, James, Kieran and Cerys. Loving great grandpa of Harrison. Dear brother of Margaret and the late Samuel and Percy. Sadly missed by all.

Funeral Service on Tuesday, 18th February at Holy Cross Church, Cowbridge at 12 noon, followed by committal at Coychurch Crematorium at 1.15pm. Family flowers only please.

PALMER Janice Sarah

Janice, wife of the late Frank Palmer, mother of Gillian and Stephen, died peacefully after a brief illness on February 2nd, 2014, aged 77 years.

Funeral Service at United Free Church, Westgate, Cowbridge on Friday, February 14th at 3.30pm. Flowers may be sent to Thomas Brothers, Greengate, Ewenny Road, St Brides Major, CF32 0SB.

TURNER Jeffrey

Peacefully on Friday, 7th February at College Fields Nursing Home, Barry. Jeff of Rhose Road, Rhose. Beloved husband of Doreen and brother to Eira, loving father of Lynne and Robert, daughter-in-law Eve and partner Richard. Much loved grandfather and great grandfather.

Resting at the Private Funeral Home of W James & Sons Fommon. Funeral Wednesday, 19th February, Service and Cremation at 2.15pm at Cardiff and Glamorgan Crematorium followed by Service at 3.15pm at St Peter's Church Rhose. No flowers by request, donations if desired to E.N.T. Endowment Fund 9240 UHW, c/o J James, 11 Fommon Road, Rhose, CF62 3DZ.

BAKER Margaret Megan

Peacefully on 4 February at University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff, Margaret of Barry.

Resting at the Private Funeral Home of W James & Sons Fommon. Funeral Friday, 14 February, Service and Cremation 12 noon at Cardiff and Glamorgan Crematorium, Barry. Family flowers only, donations in lieu if desired to Breast Cancer Care Cymru, c/o J James, 11 Fommon Road, Rhose, CF62 3DZ.

QUINN

It is with sadness we announce the death of Raymond Anthony Quinn, aged 83 years, who died peacefully at the Royal Derby Hospital with close family in attendance. Raymond was a much loved husband, father and grandfather. He will be sadly missed.

The funeral will be held at St Cadoc's Roman Catholic Church, Cowbridge on Friday, 21st February at 12 noon. Donations in lieu of flowers may be made to Cancer Research UK, c/o Thomas Brothers, Greengate, Ewenny Road, St Brides Major, CF32 0SB.

TURRELL Freda Elizabeth

Peacefully on 5th February 2014, Freda of Llantwit Major. Dearly loved wife of the late Edwin and much loved mother of Sandra and the late Clive. She was a loving grandmother and great grandmother and will be sadly missed by family and friends.

Funeral service in St Illtud's Church on Friday, 21st February at 2pm, followed by cremation at Coychurch Crematorium. Family flowers only, but donations may be made to Alzheimers Disease Society c/o the Funeral Director (cheques only please). All enquiries to W.A. Brown & Son 01446 792489.

HOWCROFT Lynda

Lynda aged 65 years, died peacefully at home in Omore by Sea on Wednesday, February 5th, after a very long illness. Beloved wife of Max and much loved sister of Susan and Catherine. Lynda will be greatly and sadly missed by family and close friends.

Funeral Service to be held at Ewenny Priory on Wednesday, February 19th, 2014 at 11am, followed by cremation at Coychurch Crematorium. Family flowers only, donations in lieu of flowers to Velindre Fundraising, Velindre Cancer Centre, Whitechurch, Cardiff, CF14 2TL.

Thomas Lynette (nee Bassett)

Beloved wife of the late Gwelfor Thomas, a much loved mother of Peter & Huw and daughters in laws, Sharon & Olwen, step grandma to Rhys & Sinead, Gareth (Hifoni) and step great grandma to Niamh. A dear sister to Peter Denny & Gill & the late Lincoln Bassett. Lynette will be greatly missed by all her family and friends.

Funeral Service to be held at Cardiff and Vale Crematorium, Port Road, Barry on Monday 17th February at 2.15pm. Resting at Park Independent Funeral Directors, 7 Tynewydd Road, Barry. 01446 421212.

Family flowers only. Donations to Velindre Hospital.

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Birth Notices

Congratulations! JUDIE Cole & JOSH Davies

on the birth of your daughter

CHLOE-MAI

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Lots of love, your rugby family 'THE BOMBETTES'

Juds, we can't wait to have you back!

Anniversaries



Public Notice

LICENSING ACT 2003 Section 84

Notice of application to vary a club premises certificate. Notice is given that an application has been made to Bridgend County Borough Council (the Licensing Authority) for a VARIATION TO THE CLUB PREMISES CERTIFICATE in respect of the club premises shown below.

Details of the application may be inspected between the hours of: Monday to Thursday 0830 to 1700 hours and Friday 0830 to 1630 hours at Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB or by visiting the authority's website: www.bridgend.gov.uk.

Any responsible authority or any other person may make representations in respect of the application, which must be submitted, in writing, to the following address before the date shown below: Licensing Section, Bridgend County Borough Council, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB.

Name of applicant: Maesteg Cricket Club. Name and Postal Address of the Club Premises: North Lane, Queen Street, Maesteg, CF34 9YN.

Details of the proposed variation: To extend opening hours to 02.30 hrs. To extend supply of alcohol to 02.00 hrs. To extend live music hours to 24.00 hrs. To extend recorded music hours to 01.30 hrs. Date by which representations must be made: 25.2.2014.

This notice remains in force from and including the day after the giving of this notice to the licensing authority, namely 27.1.2014, for 28 consecutive days.

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News in and out of class at Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg

University success

Congratulations to year-13 pupil Elis Jackson from Penarth, who has been accepted to study Engineering at Homerton College, Cambridge. We wish him every success in the future.

Swimming champs

THERE was a good day of competition at Cardiff International pool on January 26.

Not many were competing from YGBM, but the results were very good. Well done to Ellie Peterson (individual medley year-7 and 8 girls), Kory Russell (boys backstroke year-9 and 10) and Rhys James (freestyle and individual medley for boys year-7 and 8) on their efforts.

Results: Kory Russell – sixth in Wales in the boys back stroke year-9 and 10; Rhys James – first in Wales in the boys freestyle year-7 and 8 (the first Welsh swimming champion in the school's history!); Rhys James – second in Wales in the boys individual freestyle year-7 and 8.

Gymnastic competition CONGRATULATION S to the gymnastic team who competed in the County tumble and vault competition at Sophia Gardens on January 24.

Boys under-19: first, Iwan Mephram; third,

Rhys Beynon; the team, first.

Girls under-19: second, Ffion Byrne; the team, first.

Rugby

tournament

ON December 20, the year-7 team took part in the Cardiff and Vale Welsh medium schools' rugby tournament against Glantaf, Plasmawr and Bro Edern at the Arms Park.

Unfortunately, we won only one game. The results are as follows: Bro Morgannwg 15 - Bro Edern 0; Bro Morgannwg 19 - Plasmawr 26; Bro Morgannwg 0 - Glantaf 5.

Congratulations to Mason Grady who was chosen as player of the tournament.

CRYF/ PTA bingo

A SUCCESSFUL bingo event arranged by CRYF was held at the school on January 26. Thank you to all who supported, funds raised will go towards purchasing iPads and setting up a new school library.

Stage Success CONGRATULATION S to Penarth pupil Jodi Bird (year-11) on her recent success in the Star of Stage competition.

Having got through the first two rounds, Jodi reached the final at the Sherman Theatre, Cardiff, where not only did she win her own age section, she was also announced as the overall winner of the competition.

Seaview Lads angling results

FISHING has been grim since the start of the year but anglers have persevered nonetheless, often turning out in numbers.

Rockling have made up many bags with odds 'n sods accounting for the balance.

Kevin Salah landed an excellent cod of 5lb 12oz to win one competition, but this was definitely an exception to the rule.

Nice to see some baby codling being caught but with the

amount of freshwater coming down channel we await our first pike!

It would be nice to think that things can only get better except February usually sees a downturn in sport!

Results (dates approx):

January 5: 1st K Salah 5lb 12oz; 2nd G Morgan 1lb 13oz; 3rd R Harding 1lb 4oz; 4th A Harris 1lb 2oz; 5th S Davies 1lb 1oz; 6th G Griffiths 1lb 0oz; M Bjegovic 1lb 0oz.

January 12: 1st M Langford whiting 2lb; 2nd R Green conger 1lb 11oz; 3rd P Coles whiting 1lb; 4th A Harris whiting 0lb 6oz.

January 19: 1st G Spitter 1lb 1oz dog; 2nd A Saif 0lb 2oz 5 beard slug; 2nd P Coles 0lb 2oz 5 beard slug 5 Blankers.

January 26: 1st m langford 0lb 11oz; R Green 0lb 6oz; 3rd A Harris 0.40oz; 4th P Coles 0.2oz.



The year-7 rugby team.



The gymnastic team.



Elis Jackson.



Rhys James, swimming champion.

Indoor bowls season has ended at Sully

SULLY Indoor Bowling Club completed their league season with a 123-111 win over Taff Ely at Sully on Saturday, gaining 18 out of the 22 points available.

Sully won five of their 10 league games and were unlucky not to have managed a couple of more wins, losing two games after leading into the last couple of ends.

Saturday was slightly different, with Sully holding a comfortable 17-shot lead after 15 ends. Taff Ely then upped their game and started to reduce the deficit but Sully played solidly to win overall by 12 shots.

Once again, the rink skipped by Martin Clarke was backbone of the Sully team, winning by 16 shots, ably supported by Dave Curtis, Roy Richards and Graham Cogbill.

The rink of Brian Griffiths was another to perform well. With only one in the game after the 14th end, they picked up seven shots on the 15th end then went on to win by nine.

The other winning rinks were those of Dave Snelling and Mel Newman. Both started well and maintained their form, each winning by four shots.

Special mention must go to Des Bannister, who helped out at the last minute due to a late withdrawal and had a superb game at lead on Mel Newman's rink.

Overall, the league season proved difficult due to availability issues. On occasions, the club had barely enough names to put out a team. With more commitment from other club members, Sully would be able to select teams good enough to gain promotion. A big thanks must go to those who supported the stadium team throughout the season.

WIBA TRIPLES AND PAIRS COMPETITIONS.

Sully Stadium will hold five rinks of triples on Thursday, February 20, at 6.30pm and on Sunday, February 23, the second and third rounds of the pairs will be held, starting with eight games at 10am, with the winners continuing at 2pm.

There are a number of internationals playing including Robert Weale and John Price. Food (and bar) available from 9.15am.

CRICKET IN BARRY

BARRY Athletic Cricket Club start pre-season nets on Sunday, February 23, at Colcot Sports Centre, Colcot Road, Barry, 12pm till 1pm.

All players, current, old and new are welcome. The club is also looking for match sponsors. Anyone interested should contact Mark Rees on 07570 135831 or e-mail markrees509@hotmail.com

Two narrow defeats for Penarth hockey teams

FACING teams close to them in their respective divisions of the Davis Wood Hockey League, Penarth Hockey Club's two sides both slipped to defeat at the weekend.

PENARTH 2 - 3 CARDIFF & MET C

After earning a good point away at Hereford last week, Penarth's 1st XI turned their attention to old rivals Cardiff & Met C on Saturday, looking to repeat the result of October's fixture.

Once again, weather conditions were less than favourable at Barry Sports Centre, and the home side, as has become a habit, started slowly. This time, the tardiness proved costly, as Cardiff grabbed two early goals.

Conceding the second goal seemed to shock Penarth into action, and the Vale's only senior men's club finally got their act together.

Their best phase of play came just before halftime and, having put the Cardiff defence under some concerted pressure, they were rewarded with a fantastic individual goal from Phil Lane, who drove in from the right-hand side of the D and slotted the ball in the bottom corner from his reverse side.

Penarth took that momentum into the second half and were now the better team. However, despite enjoying the greater possession, the Bears could not find a way past a stubborn Cardiff defence and, just as they appeared to be back in the game, they allowed the visitors to catch them with a counter-attack that led to a decisive third goal.

Desperate to salvage something from the game, Penarth pushed forward in greater numbers, eventually managing to get a goal back

through Sam Wooding, who tapped the ball home after it had bounced around the Cardiff 'D', but it was too little too late as precious points went begging.

The result leaves Penarth still holding onto fourth position in the De Cymru & The Marches One division, but now with their opponents having pulled level on points ahead of a tough few weeks for the Vale side.

GWENT A 3 - 1 PENARTH A

The second XI headed for Cwmbran on the back of a 6-2 thumping handed out to Neath the previous weekend, but knew a repeat would be tough against a better-placed side, and with a handful of players missing.

The weather decided to take a turn for the worse but squally showers did little to dampen a competitive match between the teams occupying fourth and fifth places in the De Cymru Two table.

Gwent had taken the return fixture by four goals to two, but the result had been distorted by two late strikes as Penarth chased victory.

Incredibly, however, a similar storyline played out second time around, as the home side went into an early lead courtesy of a shot from the edge of the D, but were then held by a resolute Penarth defence, anchored by the central pairing of Richard Bromiley and Zbig Sobierski.

Turning around just the one goal adrift provided the impetus for captain Rob Harrison's halftime speech but, despite renewed effort from the Vale side, it was Gwent who scored next, this time taking advantage of a penalty corner move that left the visitors' defence exposed to a shot into the far corner.

The goal was somewhat against the run of play as Penarth gradually enjoyed more possession and pressure, but chances on goal were lacking until a quick ball from the back was carried on by Tom Davies and Dave Watkins, with the latter driving to the bye-line before providing a cross that was converted from close range by Dave Thomas.

Sensing a comeback, Penarth decided to once again throw extra men forward, leaving a back three of Graeme Jones, Craig Llewellyn and Ian Smith to contain the Gwent threat.

Unable to produce an equaliser, however, the Vale side eventually came unstuck as a breakthrough overwhelmed the defence, leaving goalkeeper Calum Grant unable to deny the home side a game-ending third goal.

The defeat left Penarth's overall position unchanged, and the Vale side now has a week off to prepare for the trip to new league leaders Abergavenny.

The 1st XI, meanwhile, face a similar challenge this weekend, travelling to top of the table – and free-scoring – Lydney, looking to avenge a heavy home defeat earlier in the campaign.

Penarth Hockey Club welcomes new, old and returning players, umpires, supporters, friends and helpers, regardless of age and ability. Training takes place on the artificial turf at Barry Sport Centre every Wednesday, with the juniors in action between 6pm and 7pm and the seniors between 7pm and 8pm.

Further information can be obtained from club secretary Dave Stevens (d.stevens81@hotmail.co.uk)

CRAIG LLEWELLYN

Did you know you can find The GEM on Facebook? com/GlamorganGem

VALE GIRLS CELEBRATE FUTSAL CUP SUCCESS

THE Vale Ladies & Girls Football Club were recently celebrating after one of their under 12 teams were crowned South Wales Girls League Futsal Cup Champions for 2014.

The Futsal Cup which took place over a 6 week period at indoor facilities across south Wales, saw 26 teams competing in regional divisions with the winners and runners-up of each area progressing to the finals event held at the House of Sport in Cardiff.

The Vale Athletic team comfortably won their regional group winning 15 and drawing 1 of their 16 group fixtures.

In the finals all the girls put in a great performance beating Troedryhiw, Porthcawl, Valleys Pontpridd and Villa Dino Christchurch before playing out a 1-1 draw with Cardiff City Ladies to claim the title.

The girls also created a bit of history as the first Cup winners for the club in just their second season of existence.



ABOVE:
Vale girls hold aloft the trophy.

Coach Luke Williams is hoping for more success for the club over the coming years.

"This is a great achievement and hopefully just the start for our club as we develop over the next five years. We have put excellent foundations in place within the grassroots section of our club with around

60 girls playing between the ages of 7-12."

The club trains on a weekly basis in the Barry area and are always welcoming new players on a regular basis. If you would like to get involved in girls football please email: valegirlsfc@gmail.com or visit the club website www.valegirlsfc.co.uk

Cottrell Park short-listed in golf awards

COTTRELL Park Golf Resort has been shortlisted for the national Golfer's Choice Golf Club of the Year awards.

The Golfer's Choice award scheme recognises the very best of UK golf clubs through votes and scores provided by club members.

From nominated UK-wide golf clubs, the St Nicholas club received votes and scores that has seen it achieve a top ten position in the category, 'best golf club for members'.

Gaynor Openshaw-Smith, sales and marketing director at Cottrell Park Golf Resort, said: "We were delighted to have been shortlisted for an industry award, but most importantly it has provided an insight into the level of customer satisfaction at the resort; it

seems that our members are pleased with the value, level of service, facilities and golf experience they receive with us - an excellent achievement for our whole team."

From ten finalists, the award winners will now be selected by a panel of industry judges.

A spokesman for the awards said: "We believe it's not just the quality of the course that makes a good golf club, it's a combination of customer service, facilities and value for money which all combine to give a great golfing experience to every player."

"Getting it right requires a lot of hard work from staff and management alike. Through the Golf Club Awards we'll find out which clubs are working the hardest, to provide a great golf experience."

NEWS FROM BARRY CHESS CLUB

Bosuns keep up title pressure

IT was a busy week for the Barry Chess Club, with three matches in the East Glamorgan Chess League and the third round of the club championship.

In a Swiss-style tournament, it takes a few rounds to sort out the stronger players from the rest. There were no real shocks but plenty of interesting games.

Peter Watkins and Chris Green are two players who should be somewhere in the middle of the pack so it was surprising that after two rounds they were the only players without any points at all.

So, when they played each other, perhaps caution was the watchword as they fought out a draw. Just above them was a clash between Martin Ricketts and new boy John Stephenson.

Before Christmas, John was beating everyone but since then he has found life much harder and has lost all of his games in 2014, so again it was no surprise to see Martin take the victory.

In the higher echelons, Lee Davis had a tough match against Dave Parsons. There were opportunities for Dave but eventually the victory went to Lee.

On the top board Ashley Davis had a very long game with Ken Hannah. For a long time it seemed that Ken would hold out for a draw but somehow Ashley found a winning move to allow him to queen a pawn for a winning advantage to maintain his 100 per cent record.

As we approach the fourth round, Ashley has three points to lead the table. The bowl is currently led by Ken Hannah with two points and the plate leader is Dave Mahoney with a win,

draw and a loss for 1.5.

The Barry Bosons and the Barry Gambits both travelled to take on teams from St John's College. The Barry teams were much stronger than their opponents so anticipated big wins.

The Bosons duly managed four wins with only Lee Davis slipping up, although he managed a draw against one of his bogey opponents, Robert Taylor to give the Bosons a 4.5 - 0.5 win. This result maintains their position as second in the division.

With the Cardiff Castles only picking up 3.5 points, the Bosons edge closer to the top spot and are now only two points behind the Castles.

Although the Camelots did not have a game this week they remain in seventh place just above the Cardiff Pawns who are still in the relegation zone. The Pawns picked up 3.5 points and trail the Camelots by only 1.5 points.

The Gambits also won easily with four victories. Windsor Lewis was the unlucky player to lose to a queen and bishop attack.

Jason Grice earned his second victory in his first season but his game was played at a blitz pace, winning in approximately

60 moves but only using 15 minutes.

In a similar time frame Dave Mahoney conjured a win but only took 10 moves. This victory moves the Gambits up to fourth place, but the Bridgend Central Express are only a point behind with a game in hand.

In the second division, the Quarks had a home game with Pentryrch A. Chris Green won a match with Will Harwood even though he was giving away 300 rating points.

Kevin Gandy and Peter Watkins both earned draws against opponents rated 200 points higher to leave the Quarks as losers, but only by a score of 3-2.

The Quarks remain in ninth place and are now only three points behind the Cardiff Crows and North Cardiff Cheetahs, but with a game in hand, so it is still all to play for.

The Barry Chess Club meets at 7:30 pm each Monday at the West End Club, St Nicholas Road, Barry. The club is open to players of all standards; whether you are interested in playing competitive chess or just the occasional friendly games.

For more details, visit <http://barrychessclub.yolasite.com>

Phil Jones

SPORTS NEWS FROM COWBRIDGE COMPREHENSIVE

BADMINTON TEAMS JUST MISS OUT ON TITLE TRIPLE

AFTER convincing wins in the regional tournaments, Cowbridge Comprehensive School had three teams out of the four representing the Vale in the South Central badminton competition.

The tournament was held at Cogan Leisure Centre in Penarth, and representing the junior girls were Kate Workman, Abby Johnson, Freya Johnson and Rhian Crossman, who faced tough opponents from Rumney, Lewis Girls and Cardiff High.

First up were Lewis Girls who, although full of energy, were no match for a well-drilled Cowbridge outfit.

Next were a spirited Cardiff High team, who despite only fielding a team of three players, acquitted themselves well to the challenge. Good wins from all four girls saw a comprehen-

sive win for Cowbridge and a winner takes all match, versus Rumney.

Kate Workman and Freya Johnson won their singles games comfortably, ensuring a 2-0 lead going into the doubles.

The next two matches saw extremely close games but the quality of Cowbridge's team saw them run out 4-1 winners, lifting the trophy and crowning them South Central Welsh Champions.

The junior boys came into the competition full of confidence during an outstanding display during the regional competition.

Evan Thomas, Harry Donnithorne, Michael Cox and Will Stewart started their competition against a resilient Cardiff High team with a couple of outstanding players of their own.

Evan, Michael and Harry all won their matches and a com-

fortable 4-1 victory was achieved. Next were St John's, who again had talent within their ranks.

However, at this level talent alone isn't enough. Sheer guts, determination and a pinch of class was needed to achieve another 4-1 win.

St Cenydd were next, and they were suffering after being humbled in their two previous matches. Cowbridge were in no mood for sympathy, as they piled on even more misery with a 5-0 win.

Last and not least was the team from Ebbw Vale. Victory in this game would secure the title and this was achieved comfortably with another 5-0 win.

An outstanding performance from a very talented group of players who will go on to represent the school for years to come.

Finally, the Key Stage 4

team of Sam Stewart, Matthew Reynolds, Finn Murphy and Josh Evans stepped up to try and retain the trophy they won last year.

First up were Bishop of Llandaff who have been stiff competition at this stage in previous years. The boys from Cowbridge produced a resolute display to come out 3-2 winners in their first fixture.

Next were the team from Rumney, who had a couple of very talented players in their ranks. Matthew and Sam won both their singles fixtures and this set up a convincing 4-1 win overall.

The last opponents were Y Pant, who could be considered as local rivals. This was a winner takes all match which escaped the team from Cowbridge, who came up against better opposition on the day, second place was an excellent achievement nonetheless.

Cavaliers' junior coaching sessions

OUR junior programmes run from Sunday, February 9 until Sunday, April 13 from 12am to 2pm at Llantwit Major Leisure Centre.

The under 9s and 11s are from from 12pm to 1pm.

The under 13s and 15s will run from 1pm to 2pm.

Is your child interested in trying cricket? The sport is like no other in developing social and life skills.

We are offering crick-

et taster sessions with top qualified coaches.

The indoor sessions cost £2 a session and are open to all youth players at the under 9, 11, 13 and 15 age groups - so essentially ages from seven to 15..

Equipment will be provided and we will be using both cricket and soft balls and using the net facilities, the sessions will be run by England and Wales cricket board (ECB) accredited coaches.

Dave Cheal

RAIN DOESN'T STOP PLAY AT SOUTHERNDOWN!

DESPITE the recent heavy rainfall, Southerndown golf course has not been closed, even for a day.

Elsewhere, golfers complain that their courses are unplayable in winter; their shoes get muddy, they can't use buggies or trolleys, they get frustrated by course closures and even when their courses are open, they have to play on winter tees and greens.

Southerndown members are lucky enough to be able to play all year round in near-perfect conditions, thanks to the unique features of this area of the Vale of Glamorgan. And,

of course, they have spectacular views to enjoy, too!

2014 promises to be a great year in the history of this famous club, with two major golfing events, in addition to the annual Duncan Putter. In July a Senior Open Qualifier is being staged at Southerndown, and then in August the club plays host to the top amateur golfers of the UK as the four nations compete in the Home Internationals. A year to remember!

In the meantime, you can book a 4-ball at Southerndown for £100 in February (quote C2M-Gem) to see whether Second Club membership is for you. Call 01656 880476.

Sully Bridge Club results

Sully Bridge Club Results for Wednesday, February 5:

North / South: First Peter Milar/Trish Tracy, 61.28; second Moira Currie/Hilary Laurence, 61.20; third Ev Kerslake/Vernon Pearne, 61.03.

East / West: First Bill Leyburn/Lynne Leyburn 55.17; second Peter Craig/Hazel Craig 54.39; third Judy Collins/Janet Cunningham 54.02.

Saturday February 8:

North/South: First Trish Tracy/Peter Millar 61.90; second Alan Jones/Carolyn Matthews 57.74; third Anne Mahoney/Dave Mahoney 57.44.

East / West: First Pam Sherman/Pat Verdon 63.99; second Hazel Craig/Peter Craig 57.14; third Helen Davies / Belinda Davies 52.08

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07 VAUXHALL Corsa 1.2i 16v, SXi, 5-Dr, Met Silver, Alloys, MFSW, CD Player, E/Windows, C/Locking, 64K

£3,990



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59 VW Fox 1.2, 3-Dr, Met Grey, 1 Owner, FSH, CD Player, PAS, 43K

£3,990



58 MINI Hatch Cooper 1.6, 3-Dr, Red, Air Con, Alloys, CD Player, E/Windows, C/Locking, 76K

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Compact convertible suits the British weather

THE Citroen DS3 Cabrio is the only convertible in its class to accommodate five passengers and to be equipped with a 245-litre boot and split folding rear seat.

That boot initially looks tiddly but after the lid is lifted it is large enough for a standard pushchair (with the rear wheels removed), which I must say surprises me.

As I sit inside the top-of-the-range 155bhp model I recall testing a Lexus IS250C luxury convertible. I was at the traffic lights when the sun decided to come out and I pressed the button for the roof to go down.

Almost instantaneously, the lights went to green and I had to get moving. As soon as the car moved, the roof stopped going down and so I was driving with it half up and with part of the boot lid still open.

I pulled over as soon as it was safe to do so. A ridiculous situation to be in, and unsafe.

Thank goodness there is finally a convertible that is well suited to the British weather and to impatient motorists like me. Because the roof does not fold back into the boot but above the rear window, it makes it more practical all round, which is why the roof can be operated at speeds of up to 75mph.

By Tim Saunders

The DS3's high quality canvas roof complements the bodywork and to the unknowing, it appears to be simply a hot hatch but we know otherwise. On first acquaintance the vehicle looks just like the DS3 coupe.

My test takes place in the middle of winter with lashing rain and, much to my wife's distaste, I have to experience driving with the roof down.

Controlled by a button on the overhead console, the hood opens and closes in just 16 seconds flat, which is just as well, because when the weather gets too unbearable that roof just has to go up.

It's just as well that it is fitted with a hardwearing interior that features leather seats and much plastic, which copes with excess rainwater well. But the great thing is that with the air conditioning turned up to maximum heat, you can enjoy all the benefits of open top driving with the advantage of a hot climate.

When the DS3 Cabrio's roof is open an aerodynamic front deflector reduces wind noise and deflects air currents to prevent buffeting.

The sophisticated Infinite Blue roof material is in blue and violet, created by a weave of three different coloured threads. One of these is shiny, with each thread reacting differently to changes in



The Citroen DS3 Cabrio.

light conditions.

Inside, the two-door DS3 Cabrio is a distinctive and sophisticated cabin which includes all-new upholstery choices, including Granite Blue leather, while there is white LED ambient lighting around the ceiling console and white lights in the instrument cluster.

The trouble is that although it is marketed as a five seater, with the best will in the world it doesn't fit five adults in comfort. Even with our two child seats in the back, it is necessary for the front seats to be pushed forward, uncomfortably so for

the driver, making it fine for short distances but not longer.

The ideal scenario is for three little scamps in the back and then the adults in the front have a reasonable amount of legroom.

The DS3 Cabrio's dashboard, air vent surround and gear knob are also colour coded to the body colour and soft top.

At just 3.95m long the DS3 Cabrio is compact enough to get into tight parking spaces, which is extremely important where I live because the council has taken it upon itself to put double yellow lines almost everywhere.

Externally, the DS3 Cabrio has eye-catching rear lights incorporating a chrome-finished DS logo, 17-inch alloys and a double chrome exhaust further adding to its cool sporting appeal.

It's a gutsy, fun car to drive with plenty of power, if required. As with all convertibles it makes a great second car.

Facts at a glance:

DSport THP 1.6-litre 155 6-speed manual

Price: £22,100

Top speed: 132mph

0-60mph: 8.2secs

Economy: 47.9mpg

Watch the video at www.testdrives.biz.

ON AND OFF THE TURF with Brian Lee

DIAMOND IS FOR EVAN

LIKE A Diamond, a four-year-old bay gelding trained by Llancarfan's Evan Williams, landed the principal race – the Coral APP Download From The App Store Handicap – at Wolverhampton last Friday evening.

Ridden by T P Queally, the 3-1 chance scored by three parts of a length from the favourite *Sagesse* to claim the £5,175 first prize.

Evan, a former national champion point-to-point rider, is really known as a jumps trainer, but he has saddled a number of flat race winners in the past.

In his popular Saturday Daily Mirror racing column, Evan said of the Ireland v Wales rugby international: "I'm putting my money on the Red Dragons at a shade of odds against. I think this one will be very tight."

Evan, please keep your tips to the horses. You're much better at it!

NELLIE'S ELEGANT WIN

NELLIE The Elegant, a three-year-old bay filly trained at Aberthaw by Tim Vaughan and racing in public for the first time took the 32 Red.Com Maiden Fillies' Stakes at Wolverhampton on Saturday evening.

Partnered by Bargoed's David Probert, the 16-1 outsider kept on gamely in the final furlong to beat the well fancied Rose Kazan by half-a-length.

RHOOSE BOY TO COMPETE IN EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

ASTON CURNICK of Rhose JSTKD has been sponsored to compete at the European Championships in Switzerland in April.

Ashton, who competes under the instruction of Joseph Schembri, has been selected by the Welsh squad to represent the junior color belt team.

Watts Coaches of Cowbridge has donated funds so that Ashton can travel and represent his club and country.

Ashton and JSTKD would like to thank Watts for the support and all at the club wish



Ashton Curnick of Rhose.

Ashton luck on his journey to Switzerland.

For more information on Tae Kwon Do in the Vale telephone 07711 234 500 or visit jstkd.co.uk.

LLANTWIT UNDER-13S TURN ON THE STYLE AT THE ARMS PARK

LMRFC U13s put on a spectacular show at the Cardiff Arms Park.

Llantwit Major RFC U13s traveled to the Cardiff Arms Park last Sunday on a wet and windy day. Llantwit knew before the game they would be up against it having lost to Clwb Rygbi last year.

The boys embraced the professional setup by using the Blues' changing rooms and also running out the tunnel for their warm up before the game.

The game started with Llantwit playing into the wind first half but straight from the whistle the Major started the game with a bang.

A superb catch from the kick off by captain Beiber Hodge saw Llantwit build and control the game playing the ball tight and driving it up with their forwards. A series of 'pick and go's' saw Llantwit on the Clwb's 22m line and a final push from the pack mauled the ball over the line. Second row Connor Treadgold was the man in possession of the ball.

With the wind firmly in the sails of Llantwit it wasn't long before Llantwit put more points on the scoreboard this time coming from fullback Iwan Robinson-Booth whose blistering pace carved through a huge gap and crossed

the whitewash for another score.

Another try came for the Major. This time from outside centre Dylan Holloway who ran a beautiful line 20 metres out to cross for the third try of the game.

Llantwit then made the mistake of sitting back and a little change in the weather saw Llantwit's dominance slowly defuse and Clwb scored 2 tries in quick succession to make it 17-12. It looked like a fightback was on the cards and it wasn't long before the game broke up and Clwb scored their third try of the game to take it to 17-15 with 5 minutes left before the interval.

The half time score finished at 17-15 to Clwb.

Treadgold barged his way over the line to score early in the second half.

Centre Holloway hoofed the ball 40 metres down field and with an incredible change of speed fullback Iwan Robinson-Booth chased the ball. Having the whole length of the field to make up and 6 Clwb players in between him and the bouncing ball he beat them all and with a silky bit of footwork he controlled it over the try line to score.

With the clock ticking Llantwit wanted to make this game their own and fly half Padmore tore the opposition backline to pieces.



ABOVE: Moment of pride – the under 13s at the Arms Park.

With the opposition unsure of Padmore's thinking they were all over the shop and it gave centres Fraser Prior and Morgan Jenkins a good platform to attack from and to make it harder for Clwb's defence.

Treadgold picked up a superb pop pass from the ground by flanker Callum McInnes to smash his way through the Clwb defence. With Connor's dad betting a tenner a try it got worse for him as Connor scored once more to take the score to 48-17 and his personal tally to 5.

A dominant performance and a

superb victory. The boys wished Padmore a happy birthday.

We train every Tuesday and Thursday. For more info contact me on 07557 128 861.

Squad: Dom Henson, Rhys Roberts, Tyler Chandler-Haines, Connor Treadgold, Brandon Hughes, Lewis Fryer, Mason Richardson, Callum McInnes, Joss Harris, Owen Hodge O, Ben Wilson, Liam Padmore, Morgan Jenkins, Dylan Holloway, Fraser Prior, Iwan Robinson-Booth, Luc Williams, Josh Dunn, Kyle Cates.

Kris Pilcher

LLANHARRY WIN TOP OF TABLE CLASH COWBRIDGE DARTS LEAGUE ROUND-UP

ON Tuesday, February 4, Llanharry came one step closer to becoming this year's league champions when they beat their nearest rivals Edmondes B 7-2.

However, the race for third spot is now wide open. The Hare and Hound moved up to third spot by defeating the Old Post Ladies 7-2, replacing the Cross Inn who lost 3-6 to the Edmondes A.

The Edmondes C slipped further down after losing 3-6 to the Farmers Arms. In the other match the Highwayman Inn also joined the race for third slot winning 7-2 against the Star Inn.

So the league standings are: Llanharry (96 points), Edmondes B (81), Hare and Hounds (57), Cross Inn (55), Edmondes C and Edmondes A (53), Farmers Arms and Highwayman Inn (49), Old Post Ladies (22), The Star Inn (16).

The next matches are on Tuesday, February 18, when there is a full programme of league matches. Edmondes B hosts the Hare and Hounds; the Farmers Arms hosts the Edmondes A; the Star Inn hosts Llanharry; the Edmondes C hosts the Highwayman Inn, while the Cross Inn hosts the Old Post Ladies.

The first matches start at 8.30pm and spectators are welcome.

So if a group of you is interested in forming a team

(six players minimum) and your local pub is willing to host you, get in touch and register your interest.

For further information e-mail Paul at cwbridgedarts@gmail.com, up-to-date information can be found on the website: www.darts.apns.co.uk. It is time to start thinking about next season! **PJT**

Junior cricket for Cowbridge

COWBRIDGE Cricket Club is organising winter net sessions at Cowbridge Comprehensive School, with coaching by fully qualified coaches.

Under-9s – eight weeks starting Thursday, February 13, 6.30pm to 7.30pm

Under-11s – Wednesdays, 6.30pm to 8.30pm

Under-13s and under-15s – Wednesdays, 8.30pm to 9.30pm

The club will be running junior teams (under-9, under-11, under-13 and under-15) in the Cardiff and The Vale League and the National Knockout Cup.

For further information, contact Sara Russell on 07806 483722 or visit www.cowbridgecricket.co.uk

Latest results in the Barry darts league

IN the Barry Darts League, BFC Allsorts maintained their place at the top of the league with a narrow 5-4 win away to the Wanderers.

Park Weasels overcame the Billy Ghosts 5-4, with Mike Blackmore hitting a 101 out shot. The Cwm Talwg also had a 5-4 win against the Plastics and the Poachers had a 7-2 victory over the Dartonians, with Ray Way hitting a 114 out.

In the first division, The Throws of Despair stretched their lead, at the top of the table, with a 8-1 win over the Starlets.

The Mariners 66 kept up the pressure with a 5-4 win over the Cambrian Runways, Ronnie Miles hit a 180 during the match. Pat's 26s beat the Caddy Cons Raiders 6-3.

RL

Bridge results

THE Latest results from Barrivale Bridge Club are as follows:

January 28, First, Mike Close and Denis Mottram (67.01 per cent); second, Kay Dyer and Mark Roderick (59.38); third, Mike Best and Peter Millar (57.99).

Bryn Gough and Dave Reed won on handicap. New members are always welcome at Barrivale. For more information, telephone 01446 418380, 01446 733425 or call at the Pioneer Hall, Beryl Road, Barry on Tuesdays at 7pm.



GEM sport



Wales and the Six Nations

Focus now turns to redemption against the French



ROUT IN THE DUBLIN RAIN... BUT DON'T WRITE OFF WELSH TEAM JUST YET!

"The Irish were superb and we were very disappointing", admitted Wales' New Zealand head coach, after watching his team comprehensively crushed in the wind and rain in Dublin by a fired-up Ireland side, led from the front by Paul O'Connell and Brian O'Driscoll, and finally undone by precision kicking from the home outside half.

...But the coach wasn't Warren Gatland...

The date was February 3, 2002, and it was his fellow countryman Graham Henry being interviewed, after seeing his Wales side (which included current assistant coaches Rob Howley and Robin McBride) humiliated by a record 54-10 defeat that saw the demoralised Kiwi vacating his post after just three and a half years and retreating Down Under to higher things!

While there is little danger of history repeating itself in 2014, Saturday's stunning 26-3 result, though not as traumatic as 12 years ago, was equally as emphatic – and the sense of *déjà vu* was palpable as a grim-faced Gatland faced the media afterwards.

"It was one of the worst performances since I have been involved with the team. We gave away 16 penalties, and were well beaten up front. Ireland certainly deserved to win," he said with typical honesty.

He went on to add ominously that while some Welsh players had not performed, the coaches, too, would have to take their share of the blame for what had turned into a full scale rout – with hopes of a record third successive championship seemingly in tatters.

The shattering reverse had been led once again by the big O's – O'Connell and

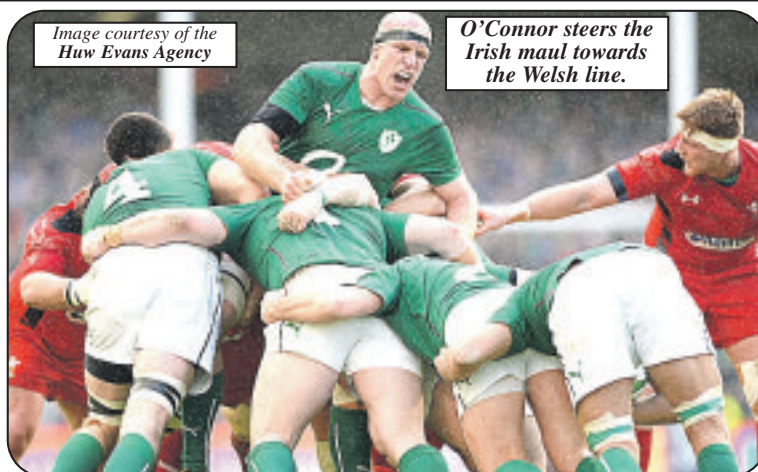


Image courtesy of the Huw Evans Agency

O'Connor steers the Irish maul towards the Welsh line.

BACK PAGE COMMENT

by Don John

O'Driscoll, while this time it was France-based Jonny Sexton turning the screw at No 10, not the Ulsterman David Humphries of 2002 vintage.

Sexton's ice-cool control and pinpoint accuracy stood in stark contrast to the flailing, error-ridden efforts of a young but experienced Welsh side containing a clutch of British Lions, whose indiscipline and frustration cost them dear the more the match wore on.

It also compared very unfavourably with the canny, controlled aggression of an Irish team that stuck to their deceptively simple but effective game plan, devised by Joe Schmidt (who on this occasion clearly won the back-room battle of the head coaches) to neutralise the Welsh power game by circumventing it.

Even so, the one-sided nature of the contest came as a major shock, with O'Connell himself saying: "I'm really surprised at the final result on the scoreboard".

Most commentators had predicted an evenly-matched, tight affair that could go either way, but were scathing in their response: Typical headlines were – "Humiliation for Welsh pack" – "Total domination!" – "No plan B!" they cried.

Be that as it may, it certainly looked that way for much of 80 torrid minutes that could never qualify as a rugby classic, and one where referee Wayne Barnes' over-active whistle had more than a passing influence on the outcome.

Old setpiece problems surfaced early with the first of two lost lineouts, and then an unfortunate injury to Welsh centre Scott Williams brought a hurried change in formation, with potent strike weapon George North having to move inside from the wing.

The coach again resisted the temptation to inject the vision and flair of unused replace-

ment James Hook into the backline – so we will never know if that would have made a difference, as the seriously malfunctioning side ran out of ideas and patience – to be immediately punished by two Sexton penalties.

(Tellingly, Wales conceded seven penalties in the first quarter alone).

With Welsh errors mounting apace, a powerful Irish lineout saw Chris Henry driven over for a try, converted by the clinical Sexton on the half hour, to take the score to 13-0.

A bleak first half ended with Wales having more problems at the setpiece and breakdown, conceding eight penalties, with nine missed tackles, and crucially losing the ball in contact – with consequent loss of cohesion and momentum.

Any hope that this could be regained after a welcome respite at halftime was lost when they were penalised yet again and Sexton made no mistake, to take the score to 16-0; and now the signs were really looking ominous for Wales, as they desperately began to chase a victory that had never really looked within their reach.

A promising attack was stillborn as they suffered yet another turnover, but finally earned a penalty of their own from referee Barnes, which Leigh Halfpenny slotted over for their only score of the match – but almost immediately danger was only narrowly averted when the normally reliable full back had a clearing kick

charged down. Minutes later, yet another Welsh infringement led to Sexton taking the score to 19-3. With 15 minutes left on the clock, replacement prop Rhodri Jones appeared to have plunged at grass height through a melee of bodies, but was adjudged to have crawled over the line on his knees.

The tale of woe was not yet over as the Irish eight again demonstrated their total dominance up front with a 20-metre driving maul, that ended with replacement back Paddy Jackson looping away unchallenged for try near the posts, which he casually converted, to make the score 26-3.

The game ended as it had begun, with Ireland seizing on opposition fumbles and pummeling away at the now battered defence.

The Welsh players were for once glad to hear referee Barnes' whistle to signal the end of a miserable ordeal whose long-term effects will clearly be a huge cause for concern as the 'inquest' into what exactly went wrong in Dublin continues back home.

Was it the fact that several key players had taken the field less than fully match fit after returning from injuries?

Has the prolonged off-field disarray involving the WRU and the four professional regions, and the latter's continuing lack of sustained success on the field, now had its inevitable spin-off in the national team's performance?

Was it all a crucial distraction in the build-up to a media-hyped Dublin encounter that Wales knew would test their players' focus and commitment to the utmost?

Who knows? At least now, though, the Welsh camp has time to take stock before the newly buoyant French come to town with a championship dream of their own.

Plenty of searching questions to be answered by the Welsh camp, yes, but it is far too early to conclude, as some critics have, on the basis of one bad defeat, that Wales have been "found out" at international level.

Or that Gatland's mantle has now been taken over by Ireland's Schmidt, on the strength of just one well-plotted victory.

Incredibly, it has even been suggested that the latter has leap-frogged Gatland as favourite to lead the next Lions' tour in 2017!

Of course, if the Kiwi can manufacture a home win over the French next week and get Wales' triple championship bid back on track, all will be just as quickly forgiven!

One thing is for sure, it would be foolish to conduct an autopsy on Welsh rugby just yet!

THE STORY SO FAR...

Wales and Ireland first squared up to each other (literally) on the rugby field 132 years ago – at Lansdowne Road, Dublin, on January 28, 1882, the Welsh winning that first Home Nations encounter by 2 goals, 2 tries to nil under the old Home Nations scoring system.

Before Saturday, these two arch Celtic rivals had locked horns 118 times, Wales notching up 65 victories to Ireland's 47, with six games drawn. Welsh teams had matched their opponents with 27 wins out of 58 in Ireland and four matches drawn – though this last outcome has rather spoilt that record! The total number of points to date – Wales 1,401, Ireland 1,304 – bears witness to the usually close-fought (in every sense of the word) nature of fierce clashes where there has never been a place for the timid!

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